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half-hours with my Girls.



half-hours With my Girls

OR

'Talks about Anything.'

BY

LADY BAKER

(AMY MARRYAT),

AUTHOR OF 'FRIENDLY WORDS FOR OUR GIRLS,'
'LAYS FOR THE LITTLE ONES,' ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the hope that these records of 'Half-hours' spent 'with my girls' in 'talks about any thing' that came uppermost, may serve as hints for similar half-hours, they are affectionately dedicated to the Associates and Members of the Girls' Friendly Society.

AMY BAKER.

RANSTON, 1878.



CONTENTS.

CHAP.								PAGE
I.	THE GIRLS	•	•	•	•	•	•	I
II.	ON SELFISI	HNESS		•	•	•	•	6
III.	ON AN OBJ	ECT IN LI	FE	•		•	•	15
IV.	ON SHAME	FACEDNES	ss .	•			•	20
v.	ON HEALTI	ł.	•	•			•	28
VI.	ON ODD J	OBS'		•			•	37
VII.	ON MARRIA	GE .	•	•	•			45
VIII.	ON TRUSTY	ORTHINE	ESS		•	•	•	54
ıx.	ON CHARAC	TER	•			•		62
x.	ON DUTY T	O PAREN	rs	•	•			69
XI.	ON SERVICE	Ε.	•		•	•		7 7
XII.	ON GOING	номе	•	•	•	•		84
XIII.	ON SWEETH	IEARTS			•	•		92
xıv.	ON SELF-RI	ESPECT			•	•		99
vv	ON DEES							108

Contents.

CHAP. XVI.	on	TRUTHFULNE	ss .	٠	•	•	PAGI
XVII.	ON	FORGETFULN	ESS.		•	•	124
xvIII.	ON	HONESTY.	•		•	•	131
XIX.	ON	CHRISTIAN N	AMES		•	•	138
xx.	ON	QUARRELLING	· .		•	•	146
XXI.	ON	SICKNESS.	•	•	•	•	152
XXII.	ON	EXAMPLE.	•	•	•	•	160
xxIII.	ON	LETTER-WRIT	ING		•	•	167
xxiv.	ON	REVERENCE	•	•	•	•	175
xxv.	ON	HAPPINESS	•	•		•	183
xxvi.	ON	DEATH .				•	191
xxvii.	ON	THE MEANS O	F GRACE		•	•	197
	COI	NCLUSION .					204

HALF-HOURS WITH MY GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIRLS.

'KITTY,' said Mrs. Wykeham to the scullery-maid one morning as she passed through the kitchen on her way to the store-room, 'now that there are four of you girls in the house, and there will soon be a fifth from the laundry, I think we might have half-an-hour's chat together on Sunday afternoons, for I scarcely seem to see you now on week-days; you are all so busy. I will arrange with Mrs. Stone to spare you from half-past three to four, or a little later; and you may all come to my room at that time next Sunday.'

Kitty wondered, as Mrs. Wykeham left her to speak to the housekeeper what the Sunday talks would be like. 'Mrs. Wykeham will have all the talking to herself then,' she thought; 'I'm sure I shan't know what to talk about, and I don't believe the others will. It's different when we're by ourselves.'

At the time appointed, next Sunday, Mrs. Wyke-

ham was sitting in her bedroom with some papers before her, when the girls entered.

A pleasant room it was, and years afterwards the girls would remember how it used to look on those Sunday afternoons. It was a long, low room, where the sun shone brightly through the three windows upon crimson carpet and pictured walls. It was just what a mother's room should be,—full of little nooks and corners where your eye rested, now to look at a coloured text, and now at the children's pictures hanging on the walls. You wondered where the goodconduct medal came from, what was the history of that model of a baby's hand; and you felt sure that everything hung in each of those panels were treasures of some kind or other. Then there were low, wide window-sills that looked just the place to invite you to come and have a chat; and as you sat in them you looked down upon the garden below with the great cedar-tree; and away past the water and the meadow to the sunny, sheltered hill-side beyond, where the old elms shed their sloping shadows on the grass.

Very sunny and quiet it looked that Sunday afternoon, and the girls thought it wasn't by any means a bad place to spend a half-hour in, provided they might only be allowed to listen and hold their 'tongues.

'Come in!' said Mrs. Wykeham, as they stood at the door as if half afraid to enter.

Kitty, whom we have already seen in the kitchen, came first,—fat, rosy, and full of fun. Do what you

would, you couldn't help laughing at Kitty; there was always such a twinkle in her eye,—such funny little dimples in her roguish face; and look as solemn as ever she could, still, 'Anyone could see,' as her old grandmother used to say, 'she was made of mischief.'

Next came Rhoda, the under-housemaid, a tall girl, with very black hair and eyes, and a quiet, determined manner. As you looked at her, you felt somehow pretty sure that it wouldn't be easy to get her to take to your way of doing things, if it didn't happen to suit with her own.

Then there was Olive, the nursery-maid, with her pale face and great, soft brown eyes, like a deer's. Mrs. Wykeham used to say her mother must have known she was going to be so silent, and called her Olive, because it made one think of peace. She was a great favourite with her mistress, who, knowing she was not strong, used to take great care of her. Many a time she would lift the heavy baby out of her arms, saying, 'He must not be carried about now, he can use his own lazy legs.' Many a time was Master Charlie perched up on the high chest of drawers, where he had to stay till he was lifted down, as a punishment for making Olive carry him about pick-a-back; for Olive, silent as she was, would do anything to please or amuse the children. Ah! there came a day when they wished Olive back again with them, 'and we wouldn't tease her for ever so,' they said,—but, then, it was too late.

Jane came last. Jane always did come last, some-

how, but whether from her slowness or her humility, no one ever quite knew. And yet she was the eldest of them all and the kitchen-maid,—but then, as saucy Kitty said, 'Jane was so slow.'

'Ah! but who won the race—the tortoise or the hare?' Mrs. Wykeham had answered one day, when she had overheard this often-repeated remark; and, true enough it was that Jane, working away slowly, yet steadily, 'never stopping,' as Kitty used to say, 'to have a bit of fun,' got through her work much quicker than the latter. Perhaps if Kitty had confessed the truth, she would have said that Jane often helped her to finish up into the bargain.

'Now, girls,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'sit yourselves down in the window-sill, and I will draw my chair here into the corner, and we'll have our first chat.

'Now, I am not going to be like an old French lady I once read of, who, when showing off a young friend of hers, of whose wit and cleverness she was very proud, said, as she introduced her to a circle of listening acquaintances, "Now, Mademoiselle, you shall talk a little on this subject, then we shall pass Thus admonished,' said Mrs. Wykeham. on to that." 'it wasn't much wonder that the poor young lady blushed up to her eyes, and could not find a single word to say. I propose, therefore, that every Sunday we should choose a subject for our next Sunday's talk: and that, in the week between, you should think it over and find out what you want to know about it. and anything that you do already know. But for today, as you haven't had any time to choose what to

talk about, I am going to read you a little paper I wrote long ago, on some thoughts that passed through my mind about selfishness; and I will call the text of our sermon for to-day, "Dear Me."

At the idea of a sermon upon 'Dear Me,' the girls, laughing, drew together in the window-seats, and set themselves to listen with open ears,

CHAPTER II.

ON SELFISHNESS.

NOT very long ago (began Mrs. Wykeham) as I was reading a book of stories, I came upon an anecdote of a little girl, only a year or two old, who used always to call herself 'Dear Me.' When she wanted anything it was, 'Give it to dear Me;' or, 'Dear Me wants her supper.' Now, as the book went on to say we are all more or less like that little girl, for though we do not actually say so, yet we think of ourselves as 'dear Me.'

Just consider what a common expression it is, this of 'dear me.' Why it slips out of our mouths half-adozen times a-day. 'Dear me!' we exclaim, 'the kettle's boiled over;' as we run to the fire to take it off. 'Dear me, how that child does grow!' we say as we measure little frocks and petticoats, setting to work and let down a tuck here, and alter a hem there.

It is often interesting to try and find out where these common expressions come from. Where do you suppose this came from? I don't think you would ever guess. It used to be, not 'dear me,' but 'dear Mary.'

I can tell you how the expression, 'dear Mary'

came into common use; but how it got changed into 'dear me,' I can only leave you to guess. At one time, as perhaps you know, English people were mostly Roman Catholics, like the French and Italians are now-a-days. They obeyed the Pope of Rome, and believed all that the priests taught them; among other things, the worship of the Virgin Mary; not content with honouring her as the Mother of our Lord.—not content with calling her blessed among women, as the Bible itself does, and as we all ought to do, they used to pray to her and ask her to intercede for them with God, giving her the honour which belongeth to Him only. They used to look upon her as their best friend in heaven, forgetting that Jesus Christ Himself is our only true Friend, and that she had no power to save them: even little children were taught to lisp her name, and thus it was that the expression 'dear Mary' came to be on everyone's lips-This was how the saying began.

As I told you before, you and I can only guess how it grew into 'dear me.' Has it arisen out of our very selfishness? Are we so fond of ourselves that we must needs invent, like the little girl, a pet name, as it were, to call ourselves by; and as we are too old to use it openly, keep it to use on the sly. Let us hope not; but of one thing we may be sure; that in the heart of the very best of us lies the seed of this sin, which, if we do not watch against it, may spring up and choke all the good within us.

I remember hearing a sermon once on this sin of selfishness: and there was one part of it I never

forgot. The clergyman was talking about this 'dear Me,' this 'self,' that we are speaking of.

'You can make (he said) as much or as little of yourself as you like; you can make so little of yourself that you can have eyes for others rather than yourself, or you can make so much of yourself that you can see no one else. Supposing I go and stand on the top of a high mountain. I can look across the valley to hills and mountains beyond; I can see green fields below, and snowy peaks above. I can see the blue sky over all—a whole world of beauty is spread out before my eyes. Suppose, then, that I lift my hand and hold it up at arm's length, before me; that hand of mine—small as it is in comparison to what I see—will shut out the sight of half a mountain. I hold it nearer, and it hides a piece of the sky as well; nearer again, and the fields and valley are hidden; till I put it close up against my eyes, and the whole of the beautiful view before me is shut out, and by what?-by my own hand. Ah, my friends,' said the clergyman, 'self is just like that hand of mine, the nearer and dearer it is to us, the more it shuts out other people, and, what is sadder still, the more it shuts out God.'

Now this very thing had happened to a man I was reading about the other day. He was very rich, had more money than he could use for himself, or indeed than he knew what to do with. He came once to a clergyman. 'Sir,' said he, 'I am a very rich man, and a very benevolent man. I should like to give away some of my money, for I have more than I can use;

but, to tell the truth, I cannot see anyone in want of it.'

Self had grown so near and dear to him, you see, had grown so large that it had shut out the sight of hundreds of poor starving, miserable men, women, and children, right before his eyes.

Now this may not happen to us, to begin; we are not likely to have, either you or I, like the rich man, more money than we know what to do with, and yet we have, each one of us, something to use for other people, and which we too often use for ourselves, or even throw away.

See how the thought of 'dear Me' follows us from the cradle to the grave. It is 'dear Me' with the children at school-treats: 'Let *Me* have the biggest piece of cake.'

It is 'dear Me' with the flowers down the lane.
'I know where the violets grow! I shan't tell you.'

It is 'dear Me' with the mother when the neighbours tell her of 'a bargain.' 'I'll be there first.'

It is 'dear Me' with the fathers when there's a good job of work to be had. 'Give it to Me.' The mothers and fathers, I know, would all say, 'It is for the sake of the children—not for myself;' and yet the children are part of them: and even for their sakes they must not be selfish. I know that in these hard times it is often a sore struggle to get along; but I think if we were not all pushing and striving so much for *ourselves*, the struggle would not be such a desperate one. You know there is an old proverb which says, 'Take care of number one.' We

none of us need to be reminded of that; but we do need to be reminded of another which says, 'Live and let live.' We are too apt to remember the first and forget the second.

Another way in which selfishness shows itself is in taking offence. We must think a good deal of 'dear Me' before we can make ourselves miserable over some hasty word, some passing slight. If we were thinking more of other people than of ourselves, we should scarcely stop to notice it, or else turn it off with a laugh, instead of going away to brood over it, and say to ourselves, as I once heard of a poor woman saying, 'I'm not offended, but my feelings is hurt.' You are not only thinking of yourself as 'dear Me' then, but as 'poor dear Me' into the bargain.

To think first of others is the true secret of unselfishness, the only way in which we can forget 'dear Me.' Have you ever heard the story of the brave and good man, Sir Philip Sidney, our own countryman, who, when mortally wounded in the thigh, parched with thirst on the battle-field, yet refused to drink the cup of water brought to him, saying, as he pointed to a dying soldier at his side, 'Let him have it, he needs it more than I do?' That cup of cold water has not been the only one given by unselfish hands.

Shall we not, like Sir Philip Sidney, look around us to see who is in want of anything we can give? Even a cup of cold water may be a priceless blessing to dying lips. And yet how often we miss doing such a thing as this, because we were so full of •

'dear Me' and our own wants that we never thought of it!

Now if I were asked to point to an example of perfect unselfishness—of self-forgetting love, I should point to a mother, walking up and down half the night with a sick, fretful child—giving up sleep and rest willingly and cheerfully for its sake. Perhaps I ought to point even more to a patient, faithful nurse, who has not the mother's love to make her forget her weariness.

'You know, Olive,' said Mrs. Wykeham, turning to her, 'what bad nights Nannie often has with Baby, and yet you never hear her angry or cross with him, or say she is too sleepy, too tired to take him up and attend to him,—that is real unselfishness.'

Well, perhaps it is not in just such a way as this that Satan would tempt us to be selfish, for most women love little children and would do a great deal for them, but there are a thousand other ways in which Satan would try and tempt us all to think first of 'dear Me;' and it is in little things that we grow selfish if we are not always on the watch. I know many girls-aye, and women too-who will be unselfish in great things, and yet do not think it worth while to trouble themselves about such little everyday matters as giving up the most comfortable chair by the fire, or the nicest slice of bread-and-butter or cake at tea. And yet it is straws which show the way the wind blows,-little deeds of unselfishness that tell whether a person is in the habit of putting themselves or others first.

'Now, do you know that reminds me,' said Mrs. Wykeham, pausing, 'of the person I was thinking of when I wrote those lines. It was a dear friend of mine, since dead, whose whole life was spent in working for others. When she was a girl, about the age of either of you, she was left in charge of two or three younger brothers and sisters, their father and mother having both died in one year. She gave up her whole time and thoughts to them. No mother could have loved them more tenderly. Again and again she refused the offer of a happy home for herself, in which they would have no share; and at last, when they were all settled, and it seemed to her friends that now indeed she might begin to think of herself and her own happiness, she caught a fever from a poor woman she had gone to nurse, and so gave up to God the life she had spent in a service of love and self-forgetfulness.

'The beauty, too, of her unselfishness was that she never let you guess that what she did for you was any effort,—she always declared, with a merry laugh; that "it was of all others just the very thing she wanted to do." If there was a piece of work to be done, she would beg to have it, saying she "couldn't bear to sit idle." If you wanted to send somewhere, "How lucky," she would say, "I was just wanting an excuse for a walk." But I should never stop,' added Mrs. Wykeham, 'if I were to begin telling you half the beauty of such a life as hers, so we must go back to our paper.'

We most of us scarcely know whether we are selfish or not, and the only way to find out would

be to ask ourselves honestly such questions as these:—

Am I always on the look-out for number one, or am I always thinking what I can do for other people?

Do I keep back hasty words, lest they should make others unhappy?

Do I give up my own comfort for others?

Do I never let slip an opportunity of doing a kindness?

If a disagreeable thing has to be done, am I the one to do it?

No one can answer these for you as well as you can answer them for yourselves, and it is to remind you to ask them whenever you hear these words that I chose for my subject to-day the common exclamation of 'Dear Me!'

'May I ask a question, ma'am?' said Olive, as Mrs. Wykeham laid down the paper.

'Yes, certainly, as many as ever you like, and the more the better,' said she; 'for I assure you I don't mean to have all the talking to myself.'

As Mrs. Wykeham said these words Kitty looked up quickly, half fancying she must have spoken her thoughts aloud the other day in the kitchen.

'I wanted to know,' said Olive, thoughtfully, 'if people can ever be too unselfish?'

'Well,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'I don't think it is a very common fault; but still I think it may be one sometimes. But tell me what made you think of it.'

'Why! it's like this, ma'am,' said Olive. 'One day mother was carrying water from the well for our

washing, and the pitchers are heavy, and coming over the door-step she spilt some, so as I was wiping it up, old Granny Scriven, who lives next door, says to me, "Seems to me your mother's heart is like that pitcher of hers; but I don't hold, myself, with wasting good things." "Mother's heart like the pitcher, granny?" said "Yes," says she; "one's over full of water, and it gets wasted; and t'other's over full of love, and it gets wasted, too," "How, granny?" says I. And then she went on to say, "Look here, Olive; if mother would make that big brother of yourn carry her pitchers for her, there'd be no water wasted, because he's stronger nor she; and there'd be no love wasted, neither, for I call it wasted love that lets a young fellow grow up selfish and unmindful of his own mother." So after that I thought that perhaps people could be too unselfish, because mother didn't give him a chance.'

'Yes; granny was quite right, Olive; and we will try to remember her lesson too.—But see it is past the half-hour, and I want you to write down in these books the subject of our talk to-day, and the lesson to be learnt from it. I think if we do this every Sunday, it will be what I've heard called "a peg to hang your memory on," and help to remind you of what we have learnt. Look, like this!' So saying, Mrs. Wykeham held up one of the books, in which she had written,—

'Sunday, March 15th.

'Subject. — Selfishness.

'Lesson.-Not to think first of ourselves.'

CHAPTER III.

ON AN OBJECT IN LIFE.

MRS. WYKEHAM had told the girls to think over a subject for the following Sunday, and that one of them should write it down and leave it on her dressing-table early in the week, that she too might have time to think it over before they met again. She had happened to lend Rhoda a little book the week before, in which one of the chapters was headed 'An Object in Life,' and Rhoda having taken it up one evening before going to bed, had thought Mrs. Wykeham would make, as she said, 'a nice talk, perhaps, out of that: so the girls agreed to put it down upon paper, for they none of them quite understood what the book meant by saying, 'I should advise every young person to have an object in life;' and then, again, at the end, 'Let each of my readers ask herself, "What is my object in life?"'

'We didn't know what it meant, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'for the story was all about a girl who supported a blind father, and worked herself nearly blind, too, to earn money enough for them both.'

'Oh, yes; I remember the book,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'and the story, too. I will try and explain it all

to you. But first tell me if you know what is the meaning of the word "object?"

The girls wrinkled up their foreheads, and tried hard to find another name for this word that had puzzled them, but none came, so Mrs. Wykeham went on, 'I think that here it means something that we should seek or strive after. A miser makes money his object in life, and works early and late to get it. An ambitious man makes it his object in life to get on, to win himself a great name. A mother, perhaps, makes her children her object in life; and so on.'

'But is that wrong, ma'am?' said Kitty; 'I mean for the mother to think most of her children; of course it's wicked to be miserly.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'your question shows that it is possible to have a bad object in life, and that it is possible to have a good one. What does the Bible tell us to seek first?'

'The kingdom of God and His righteousness,' answered Jane, who hitherto had hardly spoken.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and that should be to each of us the first great object in life—the thing that we should seek for most earnestly and think most about; though, I am sorry to say, we are all sadly apt to think least about it.'

'But do you think the Bible means we are to seek nothing else, and to think of nothing else, ma'am?'

'No!' said Kitty, 'because it says, "Seek first the kingdom."

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and that is the mistake some people make who go and shut themselves

up away from the world and spend their whole time in praying and reading the Bible; they indeed seek first the kingdom, but they forget that there is anything else that they should seek. Now, I want you to think what would be a second object that we could set ourselves to seek, besides, the first great object in life, that of seeking, and at last finding, the kingdom of heaven.'

'There are so many things one wants,' said Rhoda; though at the moment she could think of nothing that she wanted except a new spring bonnet like one she had lately seen in a shop-window.

'What kind of things, Rhoda?' said Mrs. Wykeham.

I needn't tell you that Rhoda didn't answer, 'A new bonnet,' for she knew the others would only laugh at her; so she contented herself with saying, 'Oh! I suppose everybody wants something they haven't got, ma'am.'

'I suppose most of us do,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'But the question is, Are they things worth making our object in life? Now, if I were asked what would be the two objects that would be best worth seeking, I should answer in the words of the Catechism that you all have heard so often. For a *first* object, to seek to "do our duty towards God." This is what we have already spoken of. For a *second*, "our duty towards our neighbour;" because I think that would include everything. I dare say you may say to yourselves, "Oh! but that's such a dull, stupid kind of object to have in life. We should like to choose some-

thing grander and nobler." But wait a minute. What did the poor girl we were speaking of just now in the story make her object in life?'

- 'Her father,' said Rhoda.
- 'Well, and what part of her duty to her neighbour did she do then?'
- 'The part that says, "To love, honour, and succour my father and mother," said Olive.
 - 'Was she happy or unhappy in doing it?'
- 'Oh! happy, and singing all day long over her work,' said Olive.
- 'Only, at last, her eyes began to get bad, and soon after her old father died,' put in Rhoda.
 - 'And what happened then?'
- 'Oh! she married soon after the same young man who had wanted to marry her all along, only she wouldn't listen to him.'
- 'Exactly,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'She had been a good, faithful daughter; and when God took away her one object in life, He gave her another in a good husband; and I am sure,' added she, 'that such a loving, faithful daughter would make a loving, faithful wife, and do her duty still in the new state of life to which it pleased God to call her.

'But perhaps you will say, "To whom am I to devote myself?" or as some one did long ago, "Who is my neighbour?" Who asked that, Jane?' said Mrs. Wykeham.

- 'The Pharisee,' answered Jane.
- 'No; it wasn't the Pharisee. Get your Bibles and look.'

- 'Wasn't it the young ruler, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Not him, either,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'You will find it in the 10th chapter of St. Luke.'
- 'Oh, no; of course,' exclaimed Rhoda, 'it was a lawyer!'
 - 'Well; what answer did he get?'
 - 'None, except the parable,' said Jane.
- 'But the parable was the answer,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'for it taught him, and it teaches us, that every one we come across is our neighbour, even if we had never seen him before: so you see that gives us an object in life wherever we go, for we have always some one or other about us.
 - 'What do you think was our Lord's object in life?'
 - 'To save us,' answered Olive.
- 'I should rather say that was His object in dying for us,' replied Mrs. Wykeham. 'I should say His object in life was to go about doing good,—good to men's souls and good to men's bodies; and in that, in some faint degree, we can copy Him. Can we not?'
- 'But we can't work miracles as Christ did,' said Kitty, who hitherto, though she had been listening attentively, had said but little.
- 'No; of course we can't,' answered Mrs. Wykeham.
 'But I don't think Christ's miracles were His only ways of healing. I think His gentle presence and His loving words must have healed many an aching heart. I think that His wise and loving counsel must have kept many from listening to the voice of Satan. I think that little children would scarcely have

gathered round and clung to Him, unless they had seen and known the daily and hourly lovingkindness that showed itself in His every word and action. Cannot we then make our object in life something like what His was?—for love is like mercy, of which a grand old poet tells us,

"It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes. It droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven."

'But now for our books;—for, see! it is such a lovely afternoon that, instead of making our talk any longer, I shall send you out for a walk, and you shall think a little more of what I have just said, by finding out for me in the next few days, so as to be ready to show me when I ask you, four people in the Bible who chose a good object in life, and four who chose a bad one.

'In the meantime what shall we write of the Sunday's lesson?'

The girls took up their pencils, and presently, Kitty, who had finished first, held up her book for Mrs. Wykeham to see, and in it she had written,—

'Sunday, March 22nd.

'Subject.—An Object in Life.

'Lesson. — To make God our first object, and our neighbour the second.'

CHAPTER IV.

ON SHAMEFACEDNESS.

'THE papers you gave me last Sunday evening were very nicely done,' said Mrs. Wykeham, when they met the following week in her room; 'and as I see you understand now what an object in life is, we will go on to consider to-day's subject.'

Mrs. Wykeham had, during the previous week, given each of the girls a paper on which was written, 'Shamefacedness: what does the word mean? and is it a good or a bad quality to possess?'

'I am going to choose the subject for every other Sunday,' she had said as she handed them to the girls, 'as you say it is so difficult to think of something.'

So to-day the girls came with their papers in their hands, prepared to listen and to tell what they had thought of about shamefacedness.

'Have you any answer to my question?' said Mrs. Wykeham, when they had seated themselves. 'What is the meaning of shamefacedness?'

'We think it means to be ashamed of oneself,' answered Kitty and Jane, who had talked it over together, 'because David said," The shame of my face hath covered me."'

'No; it doesn't mean that,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'though the text sounds like it. That was a different kind of shame. That meant he was ashamed of himself because he had done what he knew to be wrong. Now a person may be shamefaced and yet not ashamed of any wrong-doing. What do you think, Olive?'

'I thought so, too, at first,' said Olive; 'and then I looked in Timothy, and I thought it meant something like being "shy," or else "humble."'

'That is much nearer the mark,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but neither of the words quite explains it. I think that "bashful," or "modest," would be more what its real meaning is. When you hear of a girl being dressed in a neat and modest way, you know that means that her dress is not such as to attract attention, or make people look at her. When you hear of a girl looking up bashfully at some one who is speaking to her, you feel that she is not one of those who would pass you with a bold stare or a toss of the head. Such a girl would be what I should call "shame-faced." What would be the opposite of this?'

'Boldfaced,' answered Kitty, readily; adding in an undertone to Olive, with a mischievous twinkle of her eye, '"Out upon you!—fie upon you! boldfaced jig."'

'Now, Kitty, we mustn't play,' said Mrs. Wykeham, who had overheard her; 'though I daresay Robin Redbreast would find plenty of Miss Jennies to say it to besides Jenny Wren. But to go on with our subject. I don't think now that you will have any

difficulty in answering my second question. What was it, Rhoda? If it was a good or a bad quality?'

'Why, of course it is a bad thing, ma'am, to be bold; so it must be a good thing to be shamefaced,' answered Rhoda. 'But I——'

'You shall tell me what your "but" is afterwards, Rhoda; for, before we go any farther, get your Bibles and look at the place that Olive found, and the only one I believe where shamefacedness is spoken of in the Bible. The chapter is the second of the first of Timothy. Kitty, find the verse. Not you, Olive; for you have found it already.'

Presently Kitty, looking up, said 'The tenth,' and then she read, 'In like manner, also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness.'

'So St. Paul thought it was a good thing,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'Now there are some other places where the same word is mentioned, but not in the Bible. It is in what are called the Books of the Apocrypha, of which our Prayer-book says, "The Church doth read" them "for example of life and instruction of manners," though not to "establish any doctrine." I will read what we find there, in the 26th chapter of Ecclesiasticus, and the 15th verse: "A shamefaced and faithful woman is a double grace." And again, in the 25th verse: "She that is shamefaced will fear the Lord." Now both these texts—for the meaning of the word "text" is "reading," so we can use it as well for the Apocrypha as for the Bible—teach us that shamefacedness was considered in old

days a grace or adornment for a woman to possess. What did St. Peter say about a woman's best adornment?'

'It was to have a meek and quiet spirit,' answered Olive, who knew her Bible better than either of the others.

'So you see,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'he was of the same opinion, for a shamefaced woman would be meek and quiet too. But sometimes I fancy that people have changed their minds; girls especially, and that they think to be meek and quiet means to be duli and stupid; and that it is much better for a girl to have a spirit of her own, and not be "put upon." Was that your "but" that you began with just now, Rhoda?'

'Yes, it was,' said Rhoda, blushing; 'but I didn't understand. I've heard people say, "She's but a poorspirited creature."'

'Ah! but that has a different meaning to our "meek and quiet" spirit, or to the "poor in spirit" which our Lord speaks of. I think that means a woman who, instead of battling bravely with the hardships and difficulties of life, sits down and folds her hands and groans over them. But to return to our subject. One more instance I can give you of the meaning of "shamefacedness." When Mrs. Wyngate asked little Nellie the other day, Olive, to repeat a hymn to her, what did she do?'

'She ran to you, ma'am, and hid her face in your lap.'

'Well, that wasn't because she was ashamed of

herself, but because she was too modest or bashful to repeat her hymn before a whole room full of people. She would have said it alone to Mrs. Wyngate, I think; but that seemed to her like showing off; and so Nellie turned shamefaced, all of a sudden, and hid her face in my lap.

'Now I think you understand the different meanings of the word shamefaced, and we all agree that it is a grace or adornment. Let us try and think of the three ways in which we can show that we possess it. First, I should say by our dress; how else, Kitty, can you think?'

But Kitty couldn't think or Jane either; at last Rhoda said, 'Oh, by our manner, wasn't it, ma'am?'

'Yes, that is a second. And now for a third.'

'By our words?' asked Kitty, whose wits had now woke up.

'Yes; and by our silence too, sometimes. But we will take these three, and consider them in turn,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'First, by our dress; tell me how do you think a girl can show she is modest or shame-faced in that.'

'By being neat and clean, and not wearing fine clothes,' said Kitty.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'because in the state to which God has called girls like you, He does not mean you to wear fine clothes like the queen and people of high rank, any more than He dresses the snowdrop like the flowers in a greenhouse, purple, and crimson, and gold. They have their place, and the snowdrop has its place too, and it is none the less

me by next Sunday, and each find me some story from the Bible of a man or woman, boy or girl, who forgot this lesson of reverence for elders.'

'I know one already!' exclaimed Olive; 'the children and the bears.'

'Come! we mustn't hear it now, for we have yet the third part to notice, of modesty in words,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'There are words and expressions, you know, which it is all very well for men to use, but which are not modest in a woman. You must avoid all these. You must speak gently; and, as we said before, give honour where honour is due, not like some people who will never say "ma'am" or "sir" to anybody above them in position. But, hark! there is the clock striking, so now for the books. I think you may write for to-day:—

' Sunday, March 29th.

'Subject.—Shamefacedness.

'Lesson.—That modesty is a woman's best adornment.'

CHAPTER V.

ON HEALTH.

- 'STRENGTH, or, as we will rather call it, health, was the subject we chose for to-day's talk,' began Mrs. Wykeham, when they were seated the following Sunday. 'What was the chapter that we found this subject in, Rhoda?'
- 'In the chapter about the virtuous woman, ma'am?' answered Rhoda.
 - 'Yes; but where is that to be found?'
- 'Oh! in the last of Proverbs,' said Rhoda, 'and she was to have strength for her clothing.'
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and we decided that as King Lemuel thought a virtuous woman ought to be a strong one, we would think a little of how we can make the most of whatever health or strength God has given each one of us. But why do you think King Lemuel (and I want you to notice that it was him, and not, as many people imagine, King Solomon, who wrote this chapter) thought that a virtuous woman ought to be a strong one?'
- 'I can't think, ma'am,' said Olive; 'for it often seems to me that sick people are the best ones.'
 - 'Very often they are,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but I

think that it is generally because they are those whom God has taught through sickness to listen to His voice. I meam that God sometimes uses sickness as He does sorrow, as a rod of correction for those who else would be too busy or too careless to listen to His teachings. But still, that is not a reason why we should throw away our own health; is it?'

'No!' said Jane. 'Father often used to say when he was laid up with the rheumatics, that no one knew the blessing of health till they had lost it.'

'Quite true,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and I think that Lemuel, and, perhaps still more, Lemuel's mother, who taught him all this, knew that quite as often a sick man or woman was a peevish, discontented, grumbling one. For instance, you have all known what it was to have what we will call an "unlucky day."'

'Oh! yes,' said Kitty; 'I have, often. One gets out of bed the wrong side, as the saying is, and everything goes wrong all day.'

'Well! did you ever ask yourself these two questions?' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'First, "Is it my fault, or other people's?" and, secondly, "Is it the fault of my soul or my body?"'

'I know it's one's own fault, partly, ma'am,' put in Olive. 'But I don't understand about its being the fault either of one's soul or of one's body.'

'Well! I'll explain to you,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'I knew an old man who sometimes used to get very cross, and one day his daughter said to him, "Whatever is the matter with you, father, to-day?" "Well!

my dear," he answered, "It's summat sin, but it's summat bile;" by which he meant to say that his crossness was partly owing to his soul being sinful, and partly, also, owing to his body, that is to say, his liver, being out of order. Now it is often the same with us; and generally these unlucky days are partly because we are not quite well, and partly because we are not keeping a watch against the temptation of saying cross words or feeling out of temper.'

'When we were cross, mother often gave us a dose of physic,' said Olive, 'and sometimes only a glass of cold water.'

'Well!' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'I daresay that helped you out of many a cross fit. But to return to our subject. Lemuel, you see, agreed with the wise men of old, who said that we must always try and keep a healthy mind in a healthy body; and I don't think that a virtuous woman would be the bright, active, cheerful, loving spirit he was thinking of, unless she had been pretty well and strong. We shouldn't find, for instance, a sickly woman "rising while it was yet night," with much pleasure or profit, to look after her household and her maidens. I think, therefore, that we may look upon sickness rather as a trial than a blessing in general, which indeed we are only too ready to do; so now let us think how best we can keep well and strong. This has been a subject I have wanted to speak to you about several times lately, and we can't have a better opportunity than to-day,—for there is nurse ill in bed with rheumatism,-Olive looking

heavy about the eyes for want of sleep, because of lying awake with baby; and only yesterday I had to doctor Rhoda with fresh air and a run in the fields for her headache. So tell me, first, what are some of the things most necessary for our health.'

- 'Medicine?' asked Kitty.
- 'No! certainly not,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'though some people seem to think so. Medicine may be necessary for our sickness, but not for our health.'
 - 'Air?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Yes; that is one very necessary thing, and one you need to remember; for I know girls who, though they are put to sleep—and perhaps it cannot be helped—in the tiniest of rooms, yet would not sleep with their window or door open for anything, and say that it would give them their death of cold. Now, fresh air, even if cold, is better than bad hot air, and a little thought would soon teach you how much you could safely stand. Custom is a great thing; and I have known even the most delicate people accustom themselves, little by little, to sleeping with their window or door open. You cannot, most of you, choose your rooms, but you can choose whether to breathe good air or bad, in most cases.'
- 'Was that why you had that tin thing put in the wall of Jane's room, ma'am?' asked Olive.
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'it was a small room, and used to get what I call "stuffy," which means that the air is not as sweet and pure as it would be in a large room; so we put in what is called a ventilator, to let the fresh air be always coming in without making

a draught. Now for another thing that is necessary for our health.'

- 'Food?' asked Kitty.
- 'Yes,—good food, that is to say, for bad or improper food would destroy our health. Have we any rule given us about food in the Bible?'
- 'The Jews had,' said Olive; 'but I don't think we have.'
- 'Do you mean where it says about eating or drinking to God's glory, ma'am?' asked Jane.
- 'Yes; that is partly what I meant,' answered Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'I thought of it,' said Jane, blushing, 'because once I made myself ill with eating cake at the school-feast, and Mrs. Hayter, our clergyman's wife, spoke to me about it.'
- 'I suppose she told you that to eat greedily and take more than is good for us, is not eating to the glory of God; didn't she?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Yes, ma'am; that was just what she said,' replied Jane, 'and I always remembered it.'
- 'Well, then,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'we must be temperate in eating and drinking, neither taking too much nor too little. Now I have known girls who, without being the least greedy, yet do eat more than is good for them. As, for instance, a girl who suddenly changes the simple food of her cottage-home for the richer fare of a large house. If she is not careful she may eat as much as she sees the others do, and make herself quite ill. I knew a young girl who went as under-housemaid to a large house. She had not been

used at home to meat and beer, and yet thought she could eat as the rest of the servants did. The consequence was, she fell ill, and when the doctor came, he said it was all owing to living on food that she was not accustomed to, and that was too rich for her. Now without even knowing it, you see she ill-treated her body and had to suffer for it. The other fault, that of eating too little, is not one you are likely to be tempted to fall into, though I once heard of a girl who fretted so against some trial God had sent her, that she refused food, and thus threw away her health, and at last her life. I think each one of you, too, should learn how to cook plain food well and wholesomely, for you may have other people's health some day to take care of as well as your own.'

- 'Mother made us each take the dinner in turn when we were at home,' said Olive. 'She said she should be ashamed that any girl of hers should marry and not be able to set a decent dinner before her husband.'
- 'Mother was very wise. I wish all mothers were as much so, then we should not hear of so much waste and want,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'But now for another thing that we need.'

But the girls couldn't think of anything else whatever.

- 'Supposing I kept you awake all to-night, and tomorrow night, and every day and night for a week, Olive?'
- 'Oh! sleep, we want sleep,' answered the girls all together.

'And here, again,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'neither too much nor too little. Not so much as to lie in bed late in the morning when we ought to be up and stirring.'

Here Kitty looked at Jane, who got rather red, for Kitty, to do her justice, was generally first to be up in the morning.

- 'Nor so little,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'as to sit up late at night, if it can be helped, and have black circles round our eyes like these,' said Mrs. Wykeham, pointing at Olive. 'One thing more we want, most especially,' continued she; 'can you think of anything else?'
- 'I can't think what more we couldn't go without,' said Kitty, 'if we had good food, good air, and good sleep.'
- 'Supposing I gave you all these, Kitty, and yet tied you down in your chair and never let you move hand or foot, what should you do?'
- 'I'm afraid I should kick, ma'am,' said Kitty, laughing; 'but I don't think it would kill me.'
- 'Perhaps it wouldn't kill you, but you would gradually lose the use of your arms and legs; that wouldn't be very healthy, would it? So we want——?'
 - 'To move about,' said Olive.
- 'Yes; or what is called exercise,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'Many other things I should like to talk to you about, but I have not time, for, see, it is already beyond our half-hour; but still, one word or two more I must say. About water, now, for instance.'

'You mean about washing our bodies, and keeping them clean; don't you, ma'am?' asked Olive.

'Yes, I do; and when you think how the children in the nursery are washed all over, every day, from head to foot, and then ask yourselves how much you do in that way, you may have some idea of whether you treat your body well or ill in that respect. Then, again, about getting wet feet, and standing in damp clothes; about wearing a thin shawl or jacket, because it is your smart one, however cold the day may be; about lacing yourselves in so tight you can scarcely breathe -though I am glad to say none of you do that; about carrying heavy weights upstairs; about kneeling on damp floors because it was too much trouble to fetch the hassock; about all these things girls are too thoughtless and often throw away their health. Do you remember poor Bessie Glover, who got a rheumatic fever in that way, and was crippled for life?'

'Oh, yes,' said Olive; 'and she can never go out to service again.'

'Hark! there is three o'clock striking,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'We really mustn't talk any more to-day, though I haven't half said all I should like to; but now get out your books and write down for to-day—

' Sunday, April 5th.

'Subject.-Health.

'Lesson.—To try and keep a sound mind in a sound body.'

CHAPTER VI.

ON 'ODD JOBS.'

'IT isn't my work, and I shan't do it!' said a high young voice on the stairs the next morning, as Mrs. Wykeham was going her usual rounds. 'Mrs. Wykeham said the first and second floors were my work,' continued the said voice, 'and this isn't either.'

'And she said mine was the basement floor, and this isn't the basement, and I shan't do them neither,' answered a second voice, younger but higher.

What the 'this' and the 'them' in question were puzzled Mrs. Wykeham at first to guess, till, as she came down the stairs, she remembered that between the first floor and the basement were six unlucky steps leading from one to the other, which she had forgotten to mention when arranging the work, and it was on the most important matter of who should sweep down these steps, that the debate was being held between Rhoda, the under-housemaid, and Jane, the kitchenmaid. She said nothing about it at the time, as both the girls had disappeared when she reached the steps in question; but coming up again she happened to meet her husband to whom she remarked:

'Really would you imagine how silly girls can be? Because the six steps leading from the first floor to the basement are not either on Rhoda's or Jane's especial ground, neither of them will undertake to clean them without my orders.'

'My dear,' said Mr. Wykeham, very gravely, as if he was pronouncing sentence, 'give each of them three to do.'

'So I will,' said Mrs. Wykeham, laughing. 'I never knew you wrong in your judgment yet, and that will teach them to remember what I am going to make the subject of my next Sunday's lesson.'

Accordingly without saying a word to the girls, Mrs. Wykeham very gravely handed Rhoda next day a paper on which was written, 'Odd Jobs; or, the six steps that were nobody's work.' The paper was received with rather a puzzled smile, but no more was said about it.

'Nobody's work,' began Mrs. Wykeham next Sunday, 'and who is to do it, is to be the matter for our consideration this afternoon. Now nobody's work is to be found everywhere—in the house, in the garden, in the cottage, in the palace; but if because it is nobody's work it were all left undone, why the world would soon come to a standstill. What is to be done about it?'

'Not have any,' said Kitty; 'wouldn't that be best, ma'am?'

'Ah, yes—if it could be managed,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but if six steps have to be cleaned, and the two people whose work lies nearest both say, "It

isn't my work, and I shan't do it," what is to be done?' she added, smiling and looking at Rhoda and Jane, who both blushed and began now to see what nobody's work meant.

- 'I didn't quite mean not to have the work done at all, ma'am,' said Kitty; 'I meant make it into somebody's work.'
- 'And then each person I tell to do it thinks herself very much "put upon," and says, "I don't see why I should do it more than anybody else;" so I don't find that is a good plan. No, we must make up our minds that to be strictly just, "nobody's work" must be turned into "two bodies'" work.'
- 'You mean, ma'am, don't you,' said Jane, looking up, 'that we should each do half?'
- 'Yes, I do,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and you'll find if you notice, that whenever you hear a person say, "It isn't my work, and I shan't do it," that it is generally next door to that person's work, so at least they might agree to do half. But there is yet what Paul would call "a more excellent way" to treat nobody's work, not to treat it so much justly as generously. Do you know what I mean?'
- 'I suppose you mean, ma'am,' said Rhoda, looking rather abashed, 'that we ought to do it ourselves when it comes in our way?'
- 'That is exactly what I do mean. Don't stand upon your rights, as the saying is, but do the right which would be to willingly take upon yourself any little extra work for the sake of other people. The world is so full of these odd jobs, they meet us at

every turn; and often it takes people longer to stand and make a fuss over doing them, than it would to do them straight off. The people who are most loved in the world, are generally the pleasant, obliging ones who run and do this and that, which they see wants doing, without ever stopping to ask, "Is it my business?" I want you to remember this, especially as you are placed in the position of servants—that a disobliging person is not only disliked, but un-Christianlike.'

'I remember, ma'am,' said Olive, 'you told us once that there was generally one in each family who was the unselfish one and did the odd jobs.'

'Yes; and you said, ma'am,' added Kitty, 'that it was mostly the youngest: and I remembered that because I'm youngest at home.'

'Well, and did you do the odd jobs, Kitty?' asked Mrs. Wykeham, smiling.

'No, ma'am, that I didn't; because I had only one other sister, and mother did them all, I believe. They used to say she spoilt me.'

'She must have indeed, Kitty; and I hope when you go home next time you'll spoil her, and run all her messages, and do all the odd jobs you can think of.'

'I'll try to,' said Kitty; 'but it seems to me that sometimes the more people do, the more they are asked to.'

'Well, and I should look upon that as an honour, Kitty,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, laughing. 'It would show that you did the odd jobs so well, that they couldn't be done without you. If you did them thoroughly badly, you wouldn't be asked a second time. Besides, remember that if you do little extra things for other people, and are kind and obliging, they are sure to do the same in return for you.'

- 'Oh, I know they do, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'but it never struck me before, that one got any extra work made up for in that way, but now I think of it, one does. I remember Kitty did some of my grates when I wanted to go over to see mother one day when she was ill, and I was glad enough to do hers the next week, when her head ached, because I thought how she'd helped me.'
- 'I believe,' said Mrs. Wykeham, thoughtfully, almost as if speaking to herself, 'one reason why we are all not more ready to do odd jobs, as we call them, is because we very rarely get thanked for doing them.'
- 'I suppose it is,' said Olive. 'You see, if either Jane or Rhoda had done those steps, ma'am, they'd neither of them have got the credit for doing them any more than if they'd left them alone.'
- "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers," quoted Mrs. Wykeham. 'We must not do our work for what thanks or credit we get from our fellow-men, we must do all that we do with a higher motive "as unto God." Think how much of the best and noblest work in the world gets no thanks. Think of men who forsake home and country to go out and preach the Gospel to the heathen. Do they do it for thanks

or for love of God? Think of those who spend their lives in working among the poor outcasts in the wretched streets and lanes of our large towns—do they do it for thanks, or from the same high motive? Think again of the noblest life that was ever lived the life of our blessed Lord; when He went about doing good, was He thanked, was He not rather despised and rejected? Even when we think of the shedding of His precious blood for us, does it not remind us of our own ingratitude, our hardness of heart, who scarcely even yield Him thanks for such exceeding love? No, remember this, girls: in everything give thanks; in nothing look for thanks. Look higher; look up, and as you go about your daily tasks, adding a little here, and a little there, that might. but ought not to be left undone, remember that a loving eye is looking down upon you, and that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

Mrs. Wykeham as she ended, took out her watch, and looking at it, said, 'I see it is not quite time yet, so I will read you out of this book, a sentence I copied into it long ago, that has often and often come back to me since. There it is,' she added, as she turned over the leaves of a little black book which had been lying on the table at her side.

'Something disagreeable has to be done, somebody must do it; find a good reason why you are not that somebody. Now sometimes I have myself come across something disagreeable which had to be done, and which I felt very much inclined to leave to the next person who came by, when these words have

come into my mind, "Give a good reason why you should not do it." It was very seldom I ever could find a good reason. I might say to myself, "Oh, it's so disagreeable!" but that was no reason, or "Oh, I'm so busy!" but I felt that wouldn't do either, so those little words often shamed me into just doing it myself. I dare say when the priest and the Levite passed by and saw the poor man who had fallen among thieves. by the roadside, they both said to themselves, "Why should I trouble myself about him? I don't know It isn't my business to go and bind up who he is. his wounds. It is such a disagreeable thing to have to do, and it would only hinder me on my journey." But I don't think any of those excuses would have been good ones, and if they had either of them said to themselves "Why shouldn't I do it?" they would have been puzzled to give a really good reason. The good Samaritan didn't stop to ask himself any such questions, I think, for when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him at once, and took care of him.

'What do we call a man who takes upon himself some special duty that he is not forced to?' But the girls couldn't think, so Mrs. Wykeham tried putting it another way: 'What is your brother in, Rhoda? he isn't a regular soldier, is he?'

- 'Oh! the volunteers, ma'am.'
- 'Well, then, he takes upon himself the duties of a soldier; though he is not forced to; doesn't he?'
- 'Oh, yes, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'I didn't understand.'

- 'Now, then, I should like all of you girls to enlist yourselves henceforth as volunteers.'
- 'What for, ma'am?' asked Rhoda. 'I don't see what we can do.'
- 'You can volunteer for all the odd jobs that come in your way, and I shall enlist you as my "Friendly Corps," 'she added, smiling.
- 'Oh, yes, ma'am!' said Kitty, laughing; 'that will be a capital name now we're all in the Friendly Society.'
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and we will write for our lesson of to-day the Society's motto:
 - 'Sunday, April 12th.
 - 'Subject.—Odd Jobs.
- 'Lesson.—Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.'

CHAPTER VII.

ON MARRIAGE.

MRS. WYKEHAM greeted the girls the following Sunday, with a letter in her hand, saying, 'My subject has chosen itself for to-day, for see here is a letter in which Miss Nelson has written for us an account of Margary Abbot's wedding-day, and enclosed one from Margary herself. I will read hers first; but I forget, Kitty did not know her. Margary lived here, Kitty, several years as under-housemaid, and left to go to Mrs. Nelson as house and parlourmaid at Northcote. Her letter begins:—

'HONOURED MADAM,—I take my pen in hand to write this to you, hoping it finds you well, as it leaves me at present. I make so bold as to write to you, and Miss Nelson says she will send it after I am gone. To-day is my wedding-day, and I am very happy to tell you that I think John will make me a kind, good husband. He has got a little cottage close by here, which we have furnished with our savings. I wish you could be at our wedding, for I think so often of all you taught me.

'I remain, honoured Madam,
'Your humble and affectionate servant,
'MARGARY.'

'Now for the account of the wedding,' said Mrs. Wykeham, taking up the other paper. 'Miss Nelson has written it in the form of a little story, I see.'

'The sun rose on the morning of the 18th of June, Margary's wedding-day, in a cloudless sky, and if "happy is the bride the sun shines upon," Margary Day will be a happy woman.

'The first thing on which her eyes rested, as she looked out of the window in the morning, was an arch of evergreens, put up over the gate of the pretty cottage, where she had lived for the last year with Mrs. and Miss Nelson—"only a year," thought Margary, "and I meant to stay so long!"

'When she came back from the window, another sight caught her eye. She had laid out her weddinggown of dove-coloured alpaca the night before, with the little white shawl she was to wear, in readiness for the morrow; and now on the top of the two lay the prettiest bonnet that ever was seen, of dove-coloured silk, and white satin ribbons.

"Don't choose a bonnet for yourself, Margary," Mrs. Nelson had said; "count on me for that;" and here it was, looking as dainty and bridal as one would wish to see.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed Margary. "I must try it on. No, I won't for a minute," she said to herself; "finery shan't be my first thought to-day." So laying down the bonnet, she stept softly over to the chair in the window, and there knelt down for ten minutes.

'What Margary said on her knees she did not tell me, but I think it must have been words of love and thankfulness, dedicating herself afresh on this her wedding-day to be a pure member of Christ's Bride, the Church.

'Then she rose and finished her dressing; fastened the pretty grey boddice, tied the knots of white satin ribbon that Miss Nelson had given for her hair and throat, thinking to herself, "How glad I am that I haven't to do any work to-day, but may spend the next hour quietly in Mrs. Nelson's room. I seem to have got so much to think of—but I must try that bonnet on now." So going to the looking-glass, Margary put it on her head, and though she didn't tell me, I fancy she was pretty well pleased with the blooming face set in white ribbons and dove-coloured silk that met her gaze.

'I must explain to you that Margary was to be married from her mistress's house, and that she and her fellow-servant had each had leave to ask six friends to the wedding-breakfast, which Mrs. Nelson was going to give—wedding-cake and all.

'When Margary had finished her preparations, she went, as Mrs. Nelson had told her, into her room.

"Come and see, Margary, what the Associates and Members of the Wallingford Friendly Society have sent you as a wedding present," said she, as Margary opened the door; and, true enough, there on the table stood a beautiful clock, with these words written on a paper beside it, "For our dear

Margary — a wedding present from her affectionate friends."

'I must tell you that the Branch of the Society there is a large one,' here interposed Mrs. Wykeham, 'and that Margary was the first member whose name was written in the list.'

'Great was Margary's delight, both at the kind thought and at the clock itself, which would be so welcome an ornament to her parlour.

'The wedding was fixed for eleven o'clock, and Margary, standing at the altar in the little old church, pledged her troth to love, honour, and obey him whom she had chosen to be her husband.

'When the service was over, Margary, walking arm in arm with John, and surrounded by her friends, walked back to the cottage where she had spent so many happy days. There in the kitchen was spread the wedding-feast; and in the middle of the table, which Miss Nelson herself had decked with flowers, stood the wedding-cake. I cannot tell you in a letter all about the speeches, or how Mrs. Nelson came in and drank the bride and bridegroom's health, saying that if Margary proved as good a wife as she had been a servant, "John" was indeed to be congratulated; or how Miss Nelson made up the wedding bouquet from some beautiful flowers "John" had sent him by a friend of his, a gardener,—how Margary's mother, with tears in her eyes, thanked Mrs. Nelson for being, as she said, "like a mother to her girl."

- 'I can only add, that it was a day long remembered, both in the home Margary was leaving, and in the new home where she went on the same afternoon of that happy wedding-day.'
- 'Oh! that was a nice wedding, wasn't it, ma'am?' said Olive; 'I am glad that Margary made herself such a favourite with them all.'
- 'Yes,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'Margary knew the secret of making service a labour of love, and won in return the love of those she served; but now I am going to read you a few words that I wrote down last night for you on this subject—that of marriage. have often meant to speak to you about it, because it seemed to me that girls are apt to treat it too lightly. more as if it were a joke, than what it is, one of the most solemn acts of a woman's life. I think you know what I mean when I say they treat it as a joke. When the subject is spoken of, I have seen girls look round at one another and laugh; I have heard them whispering and giggling together, over the bare idea of one of them going to be married; and yet, if it is treated in that way, it may prove no laughing matter.
- 'I have known a girl—I do not say either of you would—talk of "getting a husband" as if it were of far less consequence than getting a new bonnet. I should be indeed sorry if either of you were to look upon it in that light.
- 'Of course marriage is a subject you are sure both to think of and to talk about, though sometimes the

less said about it till the time comes, the better. I do not ask you to leave off thinking about it. I would only ask you to think about it wisely, and prayerfully.

'Prayerfully; ah! that is the real secret of a happy marriage, to make it a subject of prayer. If you ask God to choose for you in this, as in other matters, you cannot go wrong.'

'But,' said Olive, 'how can a girl know if God is guiding her—how can she tell whether He means her to marry at all, or who it is she is to marry?'

'I will tell you,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'If you are willing to do what is right, and not what you like, God will show you what He means you to do in each step of your life, so plainly that you cannot remain in doubt about it. He may not show you all at once; but He will by degrees, if you wait.'

'You mean, for instance,' said Rhoda, 'don't you, ma'am, that if a bad man wanted to marry one, one would know for certain God did not mean that?'

'Yes; and if God kept some one away from you, it would be probably for some such reason. And so when are thinking of the time when you may be getting married, I should like you to resolve first and foremost never to choose for your husband, or even your lover, one who did not love and fear God. If you did, you could never expect to be happy. I could tell you sad stories of women who have married thus against their conscience, hoping to win their husbands to believe and think as they did, and who have learnt their bitter mistake. I could tell you of the love that was vowed at the altar dying out little

by little; of bitter words taking the place of sweet ones; of neglect and ill-usage; and all because a wilful girl had once listened to the desires of her own heart, and not to the voice of God.

'Ah! it makes me tremble for girls when I hear them laughing and joking over what may make them happy or miserable for the whole of their lives here, and perhaps even for ever. Believe me, when I say that marriage is a subject to be prayed over, not laughed over.

'There is another thing, too, I should like you to remember in "looking out," as it is called, for a husband,—a man's character and disposition. For instance, there are few things that make so many unhappy marriages as a bad temper. Now a man whom you know quarrels with his father and mother. his brothers and sisters, is not likely to prove a good husband, or make you a happy home. I should like vou. then, to ask yourselves some such questions as these before you venture on what is called "keeping company" with any one:—Is he likely to make me a good husband? Does he love and fear God? Is he bad-tempered? Does he waste his time and his money at the public-house? Does he drink or swear (not when he is in my company, but with others)? Is he well spoken of by his neighbours, or has he a bad name? Ah! if girls were to set themselves seriously to answer honestly such questions as these,—if they were to stop and think what they were doing-stop and pray over it—there would not be so many hasty and unhappy marriages.

'You have often heard the old proverb, "Marry in haste and repent at leisure," and it is the history, and a very sad one, of many marriages. A girl meets some one by chance who takes her fancy, admires her, says pleasant things to her; meets him again and again out walking, and so goes on little by little, till, perhaps, never having seen him at home, or among his own people, and knowing nothing of his real self, she promises to marry him. Well, they get married, and then she finds out that he is a very different fellow in his work-a-day suit from what he was in his "Sunday best." Plain speaking put on with plain clothes; and instead of wanting a rose for his button-hole. wanting a well-cooked dinner, and a clean-swept hearth. Ah, you must know your husband thoroughly well before marriage, if you want to be happy after, know him in his working clothes as well as in his Sunday ones, know him at home as well as abroad. You would not go into a shop and buy a piece of stuff for a dress without having looked it well over, pulled and stretched it to see if the fabric was strong and good,—asked the price, and whether it would wash or not. You would take care not to buy a dress in a hurry, without knowing what you had got for your money; and yet you would choose your husband, not knowing a bit what you'd got, or whether you had made a good or a bad bargain of it.

'But there is one more thing I would remind you of in taking care that you don't go the way to get a bad husband,—take care you don't go the way to make a bad wife.

'Learn everything you can, learn to cook, to wash, to do needlework, to be clever and handy at everything, from sweeping a room to darning a stocking. Learn to keep your temper, your money, and your health; learn to read your Bible, and by God's grace to grow into a "virtuous woman," for then only can you become "a crown to your husband," and the centre of a happy home.

'But, hark!' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'what with our letters, and my own thoughts on the subject, we have let three quarters of an hour slip away,—so out with your books and write:—

'Sunday, April 19th.

'Subject.-Marriage.

'Lesson.—True marriages are made in heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON TRUSTWORTHINESS.

MRS. WYKEHAM had several times said to the girls, 'I want you to get into the way of thinking of subjects for yourselves a little more, and not leaving all the trouble to me;' but each time they had laughed and declared they 'never could think of anything at all.'

'Now, Olive,' Mrs. Wykeham said at last, 'I don't mean to think of a single subject more till you have found me one yourselves—so tell the others so.'

'Oh, dear!' sighed Jane, when Olive told her, 'we shall never get on at that rate.'

However, they resolved to talk it over and try.

'It does seem stupid,' said Rhoda; 'for really we are thinking of something or other all day long, and I believe Mrs. Wykeham can make talks out of anything, whatever we might choose.'

'That reminds me, said Olive, of my sister who died. She once said we could find a text in the Bible for anything; so just to puzzle her, I said, "Then find one for air." "The wind bloweth where it listeth," she answered; "the wind is air, only moving."

'That would be a nice thing to try and do some Sunday afternoon,' exclaimed Kitty.

'Yes,' said Olive; 'Mrs. Wykeham lets the children find texts like that on Sundays, and they call it—the Sunday Game.'

Now Mrs. Wykeham having told the girls to think of a subject for themselves, had told them at the same time to write it on a piece of paper, and leave it in her dressing-room in the course of the next day or two, that she might have time to think it over herself. Accordingly on Wednesday afternoon, when she went up to her room to dress for a walk, she found on her table a paper, on which the girls had written, not one, but four subjects. She took it up and read: 'Trustworthiness; Truth; Honour to Parents; Honesty.'

'Well done, Rhoda,' she said, on passing her as she left her room, 'you have indeed given me plenty to think of; but that I shall not mind, for I am glad to see you can sometimes think for yourselves, so I will take each one in turn.'

'We thought, ma'am,' said Rhoda, stopping, broom in hand, 'that we'd each put down one: mine was Truth; Olive's was Honour to Parents; and Kitty and Jane made out the other two between them.'

'Well, you will see what I shall make of it next Sunday.'

'I wonder which Mrs. Wykeham will choose first?' said Rhoda to Olive on her way down. 'I was quite disappointed when I found Kitty and Jane had chosen Trustworthiness: because it seems so like mine, Truth.'

'I don't think Mrs. Wykeham will say so,' an-

swered Olive, 'though they seem mixed up somehow; but I expect that she will disentangle them.'

The girls were in their places next Sunday before Mrs. Wykeham had come in, for they were very curious as to which of their subjects she would choose for to-day.

- 'I hope it will be mine,' said Rhoda; 'and somehow I fancy it will. I wonder if she will ask us to look in the Bible for any one who was trustworthy or not, as she did about the "object in life."'
- 'Let's think of some at any rate,' said Olive. 'I know one already,' she added, 'the man who traded with his lord's money.'
- 'Oh, of course!' answered Kitty; 'and the one who hid it wasn't to be trusted. I never could see why he hid it in the ground and didn't at least put it in the savings-bank?'
- 'Savings-banks weren't invented then, I suppose,' said Jane.
- 'Oh! but they were though!' said Kitty; 'don't you remember the master asked him why he hadn't put his money in the bank, that at his coming he might receive the same with usury? only I don't know what usury is.'
- 'I do,' said Olive, 'our clergyman's wife explained it to us one day in school—it means interest, like one gets at the bank: but here is Mrs. Wykeham.'
- 'Trustworthiness,' began she, when they were settled, 'is what we will talk about to-day. It is, I think, Rhoda's subject, so she shall tell me what it means.'

'Worthy to be trusted, I suppose,' answered Rhoda, adding, 'I read that in a book.'

'Yes,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but we must, as we used to say to our governess when we were children, "boil it down" more still, that we may "get all the goodness," added she, smiling, 'out of the word itself first. Can you give me some other word that will express the meaning of "trust?"

'When you trust any one,' answered Kitty, 'you depend on them.'

'Yes; and I think that is the meaning of a trustworthy person, a person you can depend upon. Now, I want you to think a minute, and tell me of some qualities that go towards making a person trustworthy, or to be depended upon.'

'They must be truthful, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'and I was saying to Olive I didn't see what difference there was between truth and trustworthiness.'

'A person to be trustworthy must certainly be truthful,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and yet a person may be truthful without being completely trustworthy. For instance, I know somebody,—I won't mention names,' added Mrs. Wykeham, with a smile and a side-glance at Kitty, 'upon whose truthfulness I could thoroughly rely; and yet if I were, for instance, to tell her to be sure and take the kettle off the fire at four o'clock, I am afraid I could not be at all sure that the kettle would not be spluttering and boiling over at a quarter past four, while somebody would run in from the scullery, crying out, "Oh, I quite forgot!"'

'I know that's me,' said Kitty, laughing and blushing; 'and I see one mustn't be giddy and forget, if people are to trust one.'

'Well done, Kitty!' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'knowing our faults is half way to amending them. So we will add to truth the quality of thoughtfulness, for if we thought a little more we shouldn't forget. Now about truth I will talk to you another time, as we have it on our list; but speaking of want of thought, or carelessness, which is the same thing, I must tell you of a sad story I read the other day in the papers. A little nursery-maid of fourteen was out walking in one of the London parks in charge of a little boy of three or four years old, whom she was wheeling along in a perambulator. The poor little child was only half-witted, or what they call in Scotland "an innocent." It happened that he had a long white scarf tied round his neck, which by some unfortunate chance became entangled in the wheel of the perambulator. I suppose the little girl was looking about her at all the people passing, and perhaps at the flowers and green grass, which may have been a treat to her eyes; but somehow she never perceived that as the perambulator was wheeled on, the scarf was pulled tighter and tighter round the child's neck, till the poor little thing became black in the face with strangulation. A passer-by rushed up, and cutting the scarf, set the child free; but it was too late, the poor little thing died a few minutes after.'

'Oh, how dreadful!' exclaimed Olive, 'what did they do to her?'

'They did nothing, for every one knew that she was as much distressed and horrified at it as any-body else could be, and that it was owing "only to carelessness." Ah! if we thought a little more of that "only," we should not hear of such terrible accidents.'

'How could she be so careless?' asked Olive, who, from having the children always with her, seemed to take the story to heart most of all.

'I daresay she asked herself the same question over and over again, with bitter tears and sorrow,' remarked Mrs. Wykeham; 'but then it was too late. We can only hope that the terrible lesson was one she will never forget, and that she will grow up a thoughtful and trustworthy woman.'

'It does seem hard upon her,' said Kitty; 'so many girls are careless, and don't get such a terrible punishment as that. It will make me more afraid of forgetting and being careless than ever I was. I never thought anything so dreadful could come just of not thinking, and looking about.'

'Now, can you think,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'of anything else that is required to make a trust-worthy person?'

'They must keep their promises,' said Jane. 'Father once signed his name for some money for some one who promised to pay him back, but he never did; and I remember father saying he'd never trust any one again after being treated so by a friend.'

'That shows we must choose trustworthy friends;

doesn't it?' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and you see that to be trustworthy a person must be honourable; they must keep their promises, pay their debts, and never willingly deceive any one. If they are servants, they must serve their masters and mistresses, not with eye-service, but as servants of God, doing behind their backs what they would do before their faces. You know the story of the little girl who said, "Since I became a Christian, I always sweep under the mats."

- 'May I ask something, ma'am?' said Jane. 'Wasn't the unjust steward an untrustworthy man?'
- 'Yes, certainly; for he cheated his master, to make friends of his creditors. Now, can you think of a thoroughly faithful, trustworthy steward or overseer?'
 - 'Oh, Joseph!' answered Olive quickly.
- 'Yes; his master gave him all his household and everything to see after, and never asked any questions; and yet you remember Joseph was only bought by him as a slave; he didn't come with a ready-made character; his master knew nothing about him at first, but finding that he could always depend upon him he gave everything into his hand, and the Lord prospered them both.'
- 'I almost wonder Joseph was so faithful,' said Kitty.
 - 'Why?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Because, ma'am, after all, his master had no right to him as a slave at all, for his brothers oughtn't to have sold him, to begin with.'

- 'Joseph knew that we must do what is right wherever we are,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'because it is God who places us there. Do you remember what he said to his brethren about that?'
- 'No,' answered the girls, after looking in vain at each other for an answer.
- 'Turn to the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis, and the fifth and sixth verses: "God sent me," he says to his brethren; and in those words you will find the best motive for trustworthiness as you go about your daily work. "God sends me," say to yourself, and then, like Joseph, you will serve with "all good fidelity," and be "faithful servants" to both God and man.'

So saying, Mrs. Wykeham closed the Bible, and the girls took out their books and pencils to write. Kitty, who had finished first, held up her book, where she had written: 'To be trustworthy, we must be truthful, thoughtful, and honourable;' but Mrs. Wykeham, peeping over Olive's shoulder, read what she thought a better lesson,—

'Sunday, April 26th.
'Subject.—Trustworthiness.

' Lesson.—To be faithful in all things.'

CHAPTER IX.

ON CHARACTER.

THE Monday following, Mrs. Wykeham received a letter from a friend of hers, Mrs. Carleton, asking if it would be convenient to let her pay a long promised visit to Blacklands, as she should be passing by on the following Wednesday; and adding, that she hoped to be allowed to bring her little daughter Mabel with her, and the nursery-maid, Rose.

'I would not bring the latter if Mabel could do without her,' she wrote, 'as, I am sorry to say, she has a most sulky, disagreeable temper, and I am shortly parting with her. However, I know how fond you are of naughty girls, and I shall let you see if you can make anything of her.'

Mrs. Wykeham was only too delighted to hear that her friend, who was a great invalid, could at last come to see her, and set about at once making arrangements for her rooms to be got ready.

'Little Miss Carleton will have her meals in the nursery, Olive,' said she when she went upstairs, 'and Rose as well,' she added; 'so please tell nurse, when she comes in.'

Olive had been to the same school as Rose, Mrs.

Carleton's nursery-maid, so she already knew something about her.

'I wonder whether she is as cross as ever,' thought Olive; 'I know I couldn't bear her, but I ought not to think so unkindly of her, after all, for mother used to tell me that she had some excuse for speaking short, for she never heard any but short words at home; and I'm sure she is to be pitied with that mother of hers. I wonder if Mrs. Wykeham will let her come to our afternoon talk next Sunday. I'll ask her if she would like it.'

Accordingly, when Rose arrived and had been shown the little attic next to Rhoda's, where she was to sleep,—for Mabel Carleton slept with her mother,—Olive asked if she would like to come?

- 'I'm sure I don't know,' answered Rose, bluntly; 'besides Mrs. Wykeham won't want me; mistress is glad enough to keep me out of her way, I know.'
 - 'Why?' asked Olive, wonderingly.
- 'Oh, I'm sure I don't know,' answered Rose, 'except that she can't bear the sight of me: and what's more, I'm to leave to-day three weeks.'

Olive couldn't help thinking that if Rose's mistress couldn't bear the sight of her, at least Rose herself wasn't a very pleasant sight to see, with a sullen pout on her lips and a frown on her brow.

- 'Mother used to say,' began Olive as usual, but stopped, thinking Rose might not like to hear what mother used to say.
 - 'Well, what?' asked Rose, gruffly.

- 'Well, that we must go to the glass to see if we should meet with welcome.'
 - 'What did she mean?' inquired Rose.
- 'Well, mother said I must think over it, for what we didn't ponder on we shouldn't remember; but I found out next day, and I'll you how it was. Miss Evelyn—that's our Squire's daughter—was passing our door, and peeped in with the smile she always has, and a merry good-morning to mother. "I can't stay to-day," she said; "but I just looked in to catch a sight of you." "Catch a sight of me," said mother, when she was gone; "she'd better catch a sight of herself. Bless her smiling face; it does one's heart good to look at it. She's sure of a welcome, go where she may." So then I understood mother—that a happy, smiling face like hers made any one welcome, for it brought sunshine with it.'
- 'Do you know,' continued Olive, 'Mrs. Wykeham once told us that people's lives were written on their faces, and that there was some old proverb about it. Anyhow, I'll ask her to let you come next Sunday.' And so saying, Olive went back to the nursery.

Sunday came, and at the time appointed the five girls, for Mrs. Wykeham had gladly admitted Rose, took their seats as usual.

- 'It was your subject last Sunday,' she said, 'and I told you what I had chosen for mine to-day. It was to be on Character.'
- 'And you'll tell us, won't you, ma'am,' interposed Olive, 'how people's characters or lives, as you said, could be written on their faces?'

- 'Certainly I will, if we've time; but I almost doubt it to-day,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'But, first of all, what is a person's character?'
- 'What they get when they leave a place, ma'am; isn't it?' asked Jane.
- 'That's one kind of character, certainly; but I hope I have a good character, and yet I am not likely to go to service,' said Mrs. Wykeham, smiling.
- 'Isn't it what people think of one, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Not exactly,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'for they are sometimes mistaken. I should rather say, our character is what we are. For instance, if a man is a thief, we say he is a dishonest character.'
- 'Oh, and if he is a drunkard, or wicked,' said Kitty, 'people say he has a bad character.'
- 'Exactly,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'Now there are two kinds of character; what are they?'
 - 'Good and bad,' answered Jane.
- 'Yes; good qualities, such as trustworthiness, truth, honesty, good temper, go to make up a good character, while exactly the contrary go to make a bad one. What does Solomon say of a good character, or a good name, as he calls it?'
- "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;" it begins a chapter in the Proverbs,' answered Rose, rather to Mrs. Wykeham's surprise, who had not expected her to be the one to answer.
- 'Well done, Rose,' she said; 'I see you haven't forgotten your Bible.'

Rose coloured with pleasure, for to tell the truth

it was not very often that she found herself praised.

- 'So you see a good name is more precious than gold. Why, do you think?'
- 'Because it helps one to get on in the world, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
 - 'No!' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Because when we lose it it is so difficult to get again?' asked Jane.
- 'Yes; that is nearer the mark. A good character is so precious, it cannot be bought; it cannot even be given, and when once lost, it is the hardest thing in the world to regain. Now I think that girls, aye, and boys too, are apt first to undervalue this precious "good name;" and, secondly, to feel hurt if people cannot give them what they have taken no trouble to gain. I have known, for example, a girl come to me and say, "Please, ma'am, I want a place, and I hope you will speak for me, and give me a good character." "That depends on yourself," I always say. "Have you made yourself a good name to begin with, so that I can speak for you? Neither I nor any one else can give you a good character if you have not first earned it for yourself."
- 'I never thought of it in that way, ma'am,' said Rose; 'and I was wondering what mistress will say of me when I leave.'
- 'I am sure,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'if you have proved yourself a good, honest, obliging servant, she will willingly say so.'
 - 'She can't say I'm not honest,' thought Rose to

herself, though she made no answer; 'but I don't know about obliging.'

'Then, again,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'girls are hurt if their mistresses cannot say more than the real truth, and will not see that it is their own fault if the character is not a good one. I will give you an example of this. A girl whom I will call Clara May. went as a first place to a farm-house, to help the farmer's wife, Mrs. White, and make herself generally useful. After she had been there some months. I went to ask Mrs. White how she was getting on. "I don't think I shall ever make anything of her," she said; "she is so giddy and careless, and doesn't mind a single thing I say. If she doesn't mend, I must really send her home." A month after, I met her in the lane. "Well, Clara," said I, "how come you here?" "Mrs. White couldn't make anything of me," she said. "and sent me home;" and that was all she said after having thrown away her first chance of making to herself a good name. Of course when Mrs. White refused to recommend her, Clara was angry and blamed her former mistress. "I'm sorry for the girl. ma'am," said Mrs. White to me; "but how could I say she was to be trusted when I couldn't leave her to look after the smallest thing: or that she was clean and tidy, when she would come down looking like a wild thing. I couldn't tell a falsehood, however willing I might be not to stand in her light."'

'I never thought of it in that way,' said Rose again.

'But besides the character that a servant wins, we

all have a character or disposition of our own by nature,' continued Mrs. Wykeham.

- 'Do you mean that some people are passionate by nature and some not, and that sort of thing, ma'am?' said Olive.
- 'Yes, I do, and it is generally this character or disposition that gets written on our faces. You all know people whose faces tell of good nature, and others who always look sullen and miserable.'
- 'People can't help being what they're made, can they?' asked Rose, who rather took this last remark to herself, though Mrs. Wykeham had not the least intended it.
- 'I can't help it, because I was born so, is a very common excuse,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but it is a very wrong one. By God's grace we can conquer our evil nature, as the Catechism teaches us; and with His help we must try. But, hark! there is actually the clock striking, and though I have plenty more I should like to say to you on this subject, we must really stop for to-day, and you shall get your books and write what you think is to-day's lesson.'

Olive, who had finished first, held up her book, where she had written.—

'Sunday, May 3rd.

'Subject.—On Character.

'Lesson.—A good name is better than great riches.'

CHAPTER X.

ON DUTY TO PARENTS.

- 'I THINK it was you, Kitty, who wrote on your paper "Honour to parents;" wasn't it?" began Mrs. Wykeham, when the girls found themselves next assembled in her room.
 - 'Yes, ma'am,' answered Kitty.
- 'Well, then, I think we must alter the title of this subject a little, and call it "Our *duty* to our parents," because you see honour is only part of what we owe them, and I should like to consider it all. What does the Catechism tell us is our duty to them?'
- 'To love, honour, and obey,' answered Kitty, quickly.
 - 'No, Kitty; think again.'
- 'Oh, no! Of course to love, honour, and succour them,' she answered, correcting herself.
- 'Well, then,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'I think it will be our easiest plan to take our duty to them in the words in which we find it there. Why do you think that love is put first?'
- 'Because we ought to love them?' asked Jane, who was always rather slow at catching the meaning of a question.

- 'No, you do not quite answer my question,' said Mrs. Wykeham, gently; 'I said, why is love put first? not why is it put at all.'
- 'Because it will make the rest easy, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Yes, just so,' was the answer. 'If you really love anybody, you feel you cannot do too much for them; and you may observe that the Catechism does not even mention the word obey, as if to say that when a child loves and honours its parent it will obey them as a matter of course. Mind, I say honour as well as love; because the two must go together to make a willing obedience. Now let us think, first, of some of the reasons why we should especially love our parents.'
- 'Because they did so much for us when we were little?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Yes, that is one very strong reason,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and yet it is one that is often forgotten. When you think how your mother carried you about and fed you, took care of you and spent many a sleepless night with you when you were a little helpless child; how you turned to her in every sickness, in every trouble; think now bitter it would be to her now to feel that it was all forgotten, and that she was little more than a stranger to you. And yet I have known girls fling away a mother's anxious love, with some such thoughtless words as these: "Oh! it's only mother; she's always bothering about something or other," when "mother" begged them to take care of their health, for instance, or not to stay out walking late in the evening.

Fancy such a mother saying, "Ah! when my girl was but a child she would be always after me, wanting to be up on my lap and be nursed, and if ever she was ill, she'd be crying out for mother all day long; but now things are very different, and mother is the last person she'll pay any heed to." And yet such words as these are very much what some mothers have said to me when I've asked them why they haven't prevented their daughter from doing so and so. Ah, girls! if ever you've slighted a mother's advice, if ever you've been impatient of her control, remember the day may come when you may long to have a mother's breast against which to lean your aching head, and long in vain; may hunger for a sight of the face that you turn from now so thoughtlessly, and hunger in vain.'

As Mrs. Wykeham spoke, almost carried away by her own earnestness, and stirred perhaps by some memories of the past, she noticed Olive's eyes fill with tears, and knew that she at least had learnt the value of a mother's love.

- 'Do all you may,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'you can never fully repay the love and care of all those past years.'
- 'My mother didn't seem much like that to us,' said Rose, turning round to Olive, and half speaking to her.
- 'Didn't she take care of you when you were a baby, and feed, and clothe, and nurse you, Rose?'
- 'Oh, yes; of course she did that, ma'am,' answered Rose.

'Then, of course,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'you ought to be thankful to her for it, and if she does say sharp words to you sometimes, now that you're older, no doubt if you showed her more love and care, you would in return get from her more of the affection that she showed you when you were a little child. I believe that love comes back to us just in proportion to what we give out.'

'Do you mean, ma'am,' asked Rhoda, 'that if a person loves everybody, everybody loves them?'

'That is exactly what I do mean,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'I never knew any one so hard but what love would soften them. Love is like a fire, lit from heaven, which we must all keep burning in our homes, to warm and soften them; and I always think that it is the mother or mistress of the home whose special work it is to keep that fire alight. I try and find sticks for our home-fire every day, I assure you. Don't any of you be the one, by cross words and sullen looks, to throw cold water on it,' added Mrs. Wykeham, smiling.

'I'm sure we won't,' said Olive; and, indeed, Mrs. Wykeham thought, as she smiled back in answer, 'If all were like'Olive, the home-fire would be kept alight.'

'But to return to our subject, which began with love to our parents.'

'And ended with love to everybody, ma'am,' said Kitty, laughing; 'that was Rhoda's fault.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'love can't spread too far, but our thoughts may; so let us bring them back to what comes next on the list.'

- 'To honour,' said Rhoda.
- 'And what does honour mean?'
- 'To respect,' said Jane, while Olive answered, 'To reverence.'
- 'Yes, it means both,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'and we must both respect and reverence our parents.'
- 'But how can we, ma'am,' broke in Rose, 'when—' but stopped, not liking to say what was in her own mind—namely, that it was rather difficult to respect and honour a scolding mother and a drunken father.
- 'I know what you would say, Rose, and I will talk to you a little afterwards, and try and explain your difficulty,' said Mrs. Wykeham, who thought that it would be better to answer this question when she was alone with Rose.
- 'You are to respect their wishes,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'and reverence them as those whom God has placed over you. The Bible gives only one exception to this rule. What is it, Olive? Do you know?'
- 'Yes, ma'am,' said Olive, 'because I learnt it at Sunday school. It says "in the Lord," and that means that we mustn't obey them when they tell us to do what is wrong, but we must honour and obey God first of all.'
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'and when it says "obey." what does it mean?'
- 'Why, that we must do as we're bid,' said Kitty, rather astonished at Mrs. Wykeham asking such a simple question.

'And yet,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'do you girls always do what father or mother tell you? I'm afraid not; at least when their opinion happens to differ from yours. "Now I'm grown up I've a right to choose for myself," I've heard girls say; but they are mistaken in thinking that being grown up gives them a right to refuse to listen to the advice or wishes of their parents. St. Paul, when he says, "Children, obey your parents," does not add "till you are sixteen or seventeen, and after that you need not pay any heed to them;" and yet one would think that some children believed that to be the case, to judge by their actions. I don't think that you four girls are likely to be so thoughtless of the wishes of your parents as some I have known, so we will pass on to consider the last point.'

Mrs. Wykeham had purposely avoided including Rose among the others when she spoke, fearing that the wishes of her parents were of very little consequence to her.

- 'What is the last word we come to?' she repeated.
- 'To succour, ma'am,' said Jane; 'but I never did know what it meant.'
- 'Nor I,' said Kitty; 'I thought to succour meant to save.'
- 'It means to help or care for, too,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'How can you help your parents, do you think?'
- 'By sending them part of our wages,' answered Olive, readily. 'At least I try to send mother something every quarter.'

- 'Do you, Olive?' said Rhoda, in astonishment, for she knew that Olive's wages weren't as high as her own, and she never thought of sending any home.
 - 'Yes,' answered Olive; 'at first I used to send mother a present, and then I found I didn't always choose what she wanted most, so now I send her a post-office order for the money.'
 - 'I think that is wisest, Olive,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'as mother has not father now to look to, and all you young ones are growing up.'
 - 'No, since father died, ma'am,' said Olive, 'she often says it is a sore struggle to get along.'
 - 'You each must think for yourselves,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'how best to help your fathers and mothers. Some girls help most by staying at home to be a comfort there; some by going out and helping, as Olive does, by their wages—some in one way and some in another; but to each one of us the command is clear, and those who most faithfully and lovingly serve their heavenly Father will be the ones to best love, honour, and obey the earthly father and mother whom He has placed over them. Now write what you have to put down in your books and leave them for me to look over presently, for I want a word with Rose.'

When the girls had closed their books, after a few minutes' pause, and laid them together for Mrs. Wykeham to see, they all left the room except Rose, whom she desired to stay behind.

'Well, my poor child,' she said, kindly laying her

hand on Rose's shoulder, 'now tell me what you meant to say when you stopped just now.'

- 'Oh, ma'am!' said Rose, bursting into tears, 'you don't know what my home is like, nor father and mother—nobody could mind what they say; and as for loving father, I'm that terrified at him, I always get out of his way as quick as ever I can.'
- 'I quite understand, Rose,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'about your home being a very sad one, for your clergyman, Mr. Morris, once spoke to me about you, and said what a hard time you had of it; but, Rose, tell me did you ever try to be a good daughter yourself?'
- 'Well, no,' said Rose, hanging her head, 'I can't say I ever did.'
- 'Well, then, promise me that when you go home you will try, that you will do little things to help mother, say pleasant words to father instead of running away from him, try and light that home-fire we were talking of. You will be astonished to see how it will burn up if you will only persevere. You keep your part of the Commandment, and perhaps you will find out some day that father and mother have a soft place in their heart for you after all. And now let us see what the others have written,' and Mrs. Wykeham took up Rhoda's book, and read:—

'Sunday, May 10th.

'Subject.—Duty to Parents.

'Lesson.—To love, honour, and succour my father and mother.'

CHAPTER XI.

ON SERVICE.

'I AM rather puzzled to know what to do with Rose,' said Mrs. Carleton to Mrs. Wykeham, next morning, 'for you know I am leaving here to-morrow, and just as I was making arrangements to send her home, I got a letter from the clergyman of the parish, saying she must on no account be allowed to come, as her two sisters have scarlet fever. I really don't know what to do with the girl, for you see I am going abroad almost directly.'

'Oh, never mind,' exclaimed Mrs. Wykeham, 'I will gladly keep her on here for the present, as I am really interested in her. I can't help thinking that with that miserable home the poor child has really never had a chance.'

'Yes, I often thought of that,' said Mrs. Carleton, 'and I tried to keep her on with me; but being always ill myself I am not able to look after her as much as is necessary, and she set Mabel such a bad example; besides I must have some one I can thoroughly trust.'

'Perhaps you expect too much from so young a girl,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'we can't put old heads upon young shoulders. She wants to be under

an older servant who will take pains with her, and show her how to do her work well and thoroughly; for, after all, though we as mistresses talk a good deal about training young servants, yet the trouble mostly falls on the upper servants themselves, and it is them whom we must enlist in the cause. I shall try and get my good nurse to take her in hand, and see what she can make of her.'

'Well, I am sure,' answered her friend, 'I, for my part, shall only be too thankful to know she is under your care for the present.'

And so it was settled, and Rose was to help Olive in the nursery under Mrs. Davis, the nurse.

'I think the girl is willing enough, ma'am,' said she; 'only her temper has been spoilt.'

'Well, we must try and mend it by kindness,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'for you know what a miserable home she has, poor child!'

'Yes, ma'am,' answered nurse, 'and ever since you told me I feel I can't be too patient with her, poor thing!'

Mrs. Wykeham, on bidding good-bye to Mrs. Carleton, said, 'You may make your mind quite easy about Rose; for I shall consider her for the present my girl in training. You know I always have one on hand, generally from the village, who comes up whenever there is any extra work to be done, and I find the upper servants take quite a pride in turning them out useful little servants; for when they know enough, I send them out to service and take another one.'

'That is, I am sure, a real kindness,' replied her

friend; 'and you really don't find your servants object to it?'

'On the contrary,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'they are most kind to the girls; who, besides, soon get to be a real help to them, and an extra pair of hands is always welcome to them when they are busy.'

Mrs. Wykeham had told the girls that the next Sunday's talk would be on Service, thinking that she might bring in a few hints that would be useful to Rose, now that she was making, as it were, a fresh start.

- 'Service,' she began the following Sunday; 'what does the word come from—do you think?'
 - 'To serve, ma'am?' asked Kitty.
- 'Just so,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'are we all in service?' she continued.
 - 'Why, no, ma'am,' replied Kitty, quickly.
- 'Yes, we are,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, smiling. 'Who said, "One is your Master, even Christ?"'
 - 'Oh! our Lord Himself,' said Olive, quickly.
- 'Get your Bibles and find where it is.—In St. Matthew,' she continued, 'the 24th chapter and the 8th verse. Do not lose the place, for you will have to refer to that chapter again. Well, then, you see we are all servants. If we are not servants of Christ, whose servants are we?'
 - 'The Devil's,' answered Jane.
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and a very solemn question it is, and one we ought each to ask ourselves: Am I serving Christ, or am I serving the Devil?
- 'Does the Bible say anything about our blessed Lord Himself being like a servant when on earth?'

- 'Yes,' answered Olive; 'in Philippians it says, "He took upon him the form of a servant."'
 - 'Why?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
 - 'I suppose to teach us to be humble,' said Kitty.
- 'Yes; and also, I think, to teach us that there is nothing degrading in being a servant, or like a servant, as some people foolishly think. Do you remember what our Lord said to His disciples: "If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example." An example by which He showed us that He thought no work, even the work of a servant, was beneath Him—to do for us. Shall we, then, think any work beneath us, that we can do for each other?"
- 'Then what do people mean, ma'am, please,' asked Rhoda, 'when I've seen it in the papers, that they "will take any occupation that is not menial?"'
- 'Those are generally the very people who think that work for others is degrading, or beneath them; whereas work, of some kind, for other people, is the only thing that can make a man's life a really noble one, or a woman's either. We all have different work to do, but to each of us God gives some work; and because mine is different from yours, it does not follow that yours is less noble in God's sight than mine.'
 - 'Only our work seems so common,' said Rhoda.
 - 'Ah! but listen to what an old poet, called George Herbert, writes about your very work, sweeping and dusting, Rhoda. It begins,—

"Teach me, my God and King, In all things Thee to see; And what I do in anything, To do it as for Thee."

'And goes on,

"All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean
Which with this tincture (for Thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

"A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine."

- 'What does drudgery mean? do you know, Rhoda?'
 - 'No, ma'am,' said Rhoda.
- 'It means common hard work—work that has to be done, and that nobody gets any thanks for; and yet you see it may be divine work that God Himself will not disdain to look upon. What is the Prince of Wales' motto?' she continued after a pause, 'Do you know, either of you?'
- 'I have seen it written up,' said Rhoda; 'I saw it the night I went out to see the illuminations in London, on the Prince of Wales' birth-day, and there were those words and three feathers over them, all written out in fire.'

Mrs. Wykeham smiled at Rhoda's description, which sounded very alarming.

'Well, the meaning of the two words is, "I serve."

So you see the Prince of Wales, who is always the eldest son of the King and Queen of England, does not think it beneath him to have a motto which might belong to any one of you.'

- 'How did he come to have that motto, ma'am?' asked Jane.
- 'It is rather a curious story, but I will tell it you,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'The motto belonged to a blind old King of Bohemia, who was killed in battle fighting against the English. The Prince of Wales, who was there too, knew that blind as he was. he had ordered two of his men to lead him into battle, one on each side of his horse, rather than turn his back on the enemy, and he was, I suppose, so struck with admiration for the old King's bravery, that he took for his own the motto which was found engraved upon his shield, "Ich dien," or I serve. From the highest to the lowest, we must all serve, not only God, but each other; so when I hear a girl say she is going to service, I always feel inclined to sav. "You have always been in service; you are only going to a new place."'
- 'Ah, but there is a difference, ma'am; at least it generally feels different,' said Olive, 'I mean'—but what she meant, Olive didn't seem to like to say.
- 'Well, tell me,' said Mrs. Wykeham, looking at her encouragingly.
- 'I mean that here it does seem like one's home, but in other places it doesn't; but then that's because we don't only work for you just to get our wages, but——'

- 'Well, but what, Olive?'
- 'For love, too,' faltered Olive.
- 'And that is what all true service should be—work for love; "in love serve one another," said St. Paul. At home you serve for love; here you serve not for love only, because you could not afford to do that, as you must earn your living too, but also for wages. Still, as I have said before, a really loving service is worth far more than money can pay.'

'I never thought of it in that way; I thought it was just that we were paid for doing things, and so we had to do them,' said Rose.

'No, Rose, that would indeed be a degrading and an unworthy service. Love to God and love to man, if these are not at the root of your service, then, indeed, it is "labour in vain." Now for the books. See, I will write the lesson this time, and you can copy it.

' Sunday, May 17th.

'Subject.—On Service.

'Lesson.—Love to God working by love to man.'

CHAPTER XII.

ON GOING HOME.

'WELL, girls,' said Mrs. Wykeham, next Sunday—'where are you all four going to, on the first of June?'

'Going home,' said Olive, with a smile, and her whole face lit up at the thought.

They were all sitting under the great cedar-tree, for it was too hot to stay indoors, and Rose was not there, for Mrs. Wykeham had thought this week's subject would be a sad one for her, so had desired her to stay and play with the children.

'Well,' she continued, 'let us see if we can't learn some lessons about going home, for I always like to choose for my subject something that is uppermost in your minds at the moment; so we will consider first the good of going home, and then, if I may so call it, the dangers of going home.'

'Dangers, ma'am?' said Olive, looking up inquiringly.

'Oh, I see you smile at the very idea, Olive; but Satan generally manages to lay snares for us, even in the most unlikely places, and going home, as you will presently see, has special temptations of its own. But, first, what is the good of going home?'

'Oh, for a holiday!' exclaimed Kitty, 'and to see father and mother too,' she added.

'Yes.' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'the thought of a holiday is a pleasant one to all of us who are workers. "Only a week to the holidays," says the school-boy, as he counted over the days on his fingers. "A holiday at the sea-side," says papa, and all the little ones shout for joy at the idea of escaping from town this hot weather. "A trip in the country on Whit Monday; that will be a holiday," says some tired mother of a large family. " Home for a holiday," say some of you girls; and I can see by your smiling faces what you think of that. Now the good of going home for a holiday, besides the pleasure of seeing father, mother, and all of them again, is to have a little rest and change. I, too, am going away, and my holiday will be a rest from housekeeping-a rest from thinking all day long about other people's wants and work; a change that will freshen me up as much as I hope it will vou, and make us all come back to work again with fresh strength and zest. What does the word zest mean. Olive?'

'I don't know, ma'am, quite,' answered she.

'Nor I either,' said Kitty.

But Rhoda, looking up, asked, 'Does it not mean something like zeal?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'you know what I mean when I say that such or such a person is working very zealously in a good cause. It means working with all one's might. You must always ask me,' she

added, turning to the others, 'when I let slip any word that you cannot understand, for I generally try to use simple ones, that you know the meaning of.'

- 'Yes, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'and we do know most times.'
- 'And sometimes,' added Kitty, 'we know what the words mean, only we can't put it rightly into other words.'
- 'Yes, I see that,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but then you must stop a minute and think, and the words will come. I remember, when I was young, I used often to say to my governess, when I wanted to make her understand something, just what you say now, "I know what I mean, but I can't explain it." And her answer always was, "Get a piece of paper and a pencil, and write it down in half-a-dozen different ways, till you do explain it," and so at last, by thinking, I learnt to do it; but I used to consider it very hard work.
- 'That reminds me,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'of what we were speaking of; namely, working "with our might." Who tells us to do that?'
 - 'Solomon,' answered Rhoda.
 - 'Tell me the verse,' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," replied Rhoda. 'It is in the Proverbs or the Ecclesiastes.'
- 'You'd better get your Bibles and look,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'for that is the way you learn to search the Scriptures, and know where texts are to be found.'

- 'Ecclesiastes, ix. 10,' read Rhoda presently.
- 'Well,' Mrs. Wykeham went on, 'and as we are all apt to get tired of working with our might, these holidays are, as it were, "standing-still times," when we rest a bit, in order to work better and more zealously when we begin again. But we must all take care that our holidays, instead of being "standing-still times," are not times of backsliding as well. You know when a horse has been pulling a heavy load up-hill, perhaps half-way up, the driver lets him stand still to rest.'
- 'Oh, yes, ma'am,' said Kitty, 'and puts a stone under the cart-wheel to prevent its slipping back.'
- 'Exactly,' replied Mrs. Wykeham. 'Now fancy each of yourselves, that horse just going to pull up and rest a bit on the hill. I am the carter,' she continued, smiling, 'and I am going to look out for a stone to put under your cart-wheel, to prevent your slipping backwards while you rest.'

The girls looked at each other and laughed, wondering what was coming next, as Mrs. Wykeham took a piece of paper and tore it into five strips. Then taking out her gold pencil-case, she screwed it up very slowly, wrote something on each strip of paper, saying, as she handed one to each of the girls, 'There is the same sized stone for each wheel.'

On each piece of paper she had written one word, 'Watch.' At first the girls looked very puzzled; then Rhoda said, 'Do you mean, ma'am, that we shan't be backsliding while we are at home if we remember to watch against any temptations?'

- 'Exactly, Rhoda; you have explained my thought, as well as I could myself,' answered Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'What kinds of temptation, ma'am?' asked Olive thoughtfully.
- 'Well, I will tell you some. For instance, when you go home, you each feel as if you were your own mistress to a certain extent, and no longer as much under the control of father and mother as you used to be; perhaps you want to go somewhere that they do not approve of, or stay out later in the evening than they like; when you are tempted to behave like that—"put the stone under your cartwheel, and watch."—Say to yourself, "I must obey father and mother as much now as ever." When you are tempted to do something which you feel your mistress would not allow you to do in her own house—to stay away from church on Sunday, to wear showy dresses, or to go about in a slovenly, untidy way-"put the stone under your cart-wheel, and watch."—When you are tempted to keep company with some one whom you feel would not be welcome at home or in your place at service—"put the stone under your cart-wheel, and watch."-When you are tempted to compare the ways of living with what you get here, to grumble at the food, because it may not be as well cooked, or the beds, because they are not soft; to be fine and stuck-up, and so hurt the feelings of your parents-"put the stone under the cart-wheel, and watch"'-
 - 'I know now what kind of things you mean,

ma'am,' said Rhoda. 'I remember father scolding sister well, when she first came home from service, about that very thing, and he said, "If she was going to turn fine lady, and despise her old father and mother, she had better not come home at all;" and then there was Martha Jane used to go about the village, looking such a figure, when she was home for——'

- 'Never mind about Martha Jane. I would rather you minded about Rhoda,' said Mrs. Wykeham, who did not encourage the girls ever to tell tales of one another, or of their neighbours. 'There is a little book,' she continued, taking one up from the table, 'out of which I should like to read you a chapter about going home. It is the story of a girl called Ellen Winkworth; it is all about her first place, and how she got on in it; but here in this chapter, we have the account of her going home after two years' service. It is getting late, so I can only read you part of it; but listen to this.
- "Here you are at last," called out brother Joe, as the carrier's cart stopped at the little wicket-gate she knew so well. "Hurrah for old Nell!" he shouted, as flying down the garden-path he caught her by the waist and swung her round and round, till she was fairly out of breath.
- "Now, none of your nonsense, Joe," called out mother at the porch; "let Nellie come in here, and you take down her boxes."
- 'Nellie ran up the path at sight of mother, flung her arms round her neck, and fairly sobbed.
 - "Why, mother, how stout you've grown," she

said at last, lifting up her head from mother's broad shoulder, laughing and crying all together.

- "Well, child, and you've grown too, only it's the other way, so it's as broad as it's long, said mother, wiping her eyes with her apron; but whether for laughing or crying it would be hard to tell.
- "Well, Nell," said father, coming in at the moment, "thee be growed a smart lass, and no mistake. Why thee'll be having all the lads of the village arter thee."
- "I'm come to see my old dad," said Nellie, kissing him, "and not to be stared at by the village lads: I'd soon send them to the right-about if they did come, father: and that you know as well as I."
- "Well said, my girl," answered her father; "I only spoke in jest, for I know my Nell isn't the girl to hold herself cheap like that."
- 'It was now tea-time, so with these words, father seated himself at the table, where mother's best cakes and Joe's first strawberries were waiting to do Nell honour. Time would fail me to tell of that tea, or how Nell unpacked her box afterwards, bringing out the workbag she had made for mother, the socks she had knitted for father, Joe's knife, and, best of all, a purse for father and mother both, with two gold sovereigns in it. Sunshine, indeed, shone in the cottage that night, for wasn't Nell come home for a holiday? Nell wasn't idle the next day, nor the next, nor any day while her holiday lasted. There was the mending-basket to be cleared, and mother's new dress to be got on with; then there

was Joe to be taught how to make father's boots shine with the new polish she had brought home, the same they used up at the House; then mother must be shown how to make that new pudding she had got cook to teach her; oh, lots of things to be done, and certainly no time to go idling about with the village lads, of even for a fairing with cousin Tom, because mother didn't like it.

- "Oh, dear," cried Nell, when the carrier's cart came round again, "how I do wish a holiday could last for ever."
- "Then," said father, "it wouldn't be a holiday any more——"
- 'And now see,' said Mrs. Wykeham, laying down the book, 'it is long past our time, so just write down some one lesson you have learnt this afternoon, and then you must all be off to tea. What, Kitty! are you ready?'
 - 'Yes, ma'am,' said Kitty; 'will this do?

' Sunday, May 24th.

'Subject.—On going Home.

'Lesson.-Holidays must not be "idle days."'

CHAPTER XIII.

ON SWEETHEARTS.

- 'I SHALL miss the girls so next Sunday,' said Mrs. Wykeham to the friend with whom she was staying at the sea-side.
- 'I don't see why you should,' she answered; 'for you can adopt some other girls for the time being instead of your own. There's the class of Friendly Society members at the Home with no one to teach them next Sunday, and I'm sure it would be a great kindness if you would take them. They are so disappointed when Miss Pears can't come.'
- 'Well, so I will, then,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; and if, as you want me to, I write down these Sunday talks for the benefit of other girls; perhaps it will be just as well to have a few words for some who are not in service, and who have other temptations.'
- 'I think so, too,' answered Mrs. Ellis; 'and I can tell you one subject I wish you would choose for our girls, and who, you know, are mostly apprentices, though a few are factory girls—and that is, on what they call "keeping company." When they leave off work in the evening, they generally

go for a walk with some young man or other, who is called their "follower," who is often a most undesirable acquaintance, and leads them into all kinds of folly, and even sin.'

'Yes, it is curious,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'that girls in our rank of life are so carefully "chaperoned," and never sent about, except with an older person, and yet these girls are allowed to go just where they like, and with whom they like. One would think that their temptations being so much greater, their parents would be doubly particular.'

Next Sunday, at three o'clock, Mrs. Wykeham, putting her head in at the door of her friend's sitting-room, said, holding up a paper, 'I am just off, and I will tell you how I get on when I come back.'

When Mrs. Wykeham reached the door of the Girls' Friendly Lodge, she was pleased to see a number of neatly dressed young women just going into the class-room. 'I shall have a good class anyhow,' she thought, and I suppose my paper will find favour from its subject.

After having chatted a little with the girls, and told them about her Sundays at home, she went on: 'And now you see I am come down to have a little talk with you. I never give my girls what you would call a regular lesson, but I like them to carry away some one little thought for each Sunday—though we talk about almost anything. Now I always like to choose, or let them choose, something to talk about that really interests them; and as I know a

good many girls, I find there is one subject in which they are always interested, and that I have chosen for to-day. Can you guess what it is?'

But none of the girls could guess at all.

- 'Sweethearts,' said Mrs. Wykeham, and as she said the word, a subdued titter ran all round the class.
- 'Ah, I thought you would like to hear what I had to say about that,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, smiling, 'for to every woman, rich or poor, love is the most precious and longed-for treasure in the world; but what I want to do, is to help you to distinguish between the love that is like real gold and the love that is like worthless tinsel, for I fear vou often mistake the one for the other. Now-a-days we only apply the word "sweetheart" to a lover; but you know it used to be a common word of endearment, and a mother would call her child "sweetheart," or "dear heart," so that we may take the word to mean some one whom we love very dearly. Now it is most likely that many of you have, or hope to have, a lover or sweetheart, so I am going to give you a little advice-first, how to choose him; and then how to keep him.
- 'Shall I tell you how I think many a girl chooses her sweetheart? Just by chance, nothing else; and the first young man whom she meets out walking, perhaps, or who speaks in a friendly way to her, is allowed to call himself her lover or sweetheart for the time being. Probably this young man does not really love the girl at all, and very likely only cares

to amuse himself with her, and then will go off to some one else to do the same thing. Now a girl who had any self-respect would not make herself as cheap as this; she would say to herself, "If this young man really loves me, and means to marry me, he will take some trouble to come after me, and not expect me to be always on the look-out for him. If I am worth marrying, I'm worth his coming to see me at home; and as for walking out alone with him in the evening, I'm not going to be mistaken for a girl who has no respect for her character." But instead of this, perhaps the foolish girl thinks it is a very fine thing to have a young man to walk arm in arm with; and when she passes her friends in the streets, she is quite proud to let them see that she has a sweetheart, as she calls it, when perhaps they have none. Ah, girls, if ever you find yourself thinking like that, take care. Ask yourself, "Is this sweetheart of mine, the man I mean to marry—the man who will make me a kind, good husband—the man whom my parents will approve of, and whose character is so good that it alone would insure my not being spoken lightly of, when I am seen in his company?" If you can honestly answer "Yes" to yourself, then I should say, by all means go and take your walks together, though not late in the evening. By all means hold up your head before the world, and "thank God for an honest man's love:" but if you feel in your heart that you would have to say just the very opposite, and that it is only to gratify your vanity and your pride that you are listening to what he has to say, and that if any one else behind you were listening, you would blush and turn away, then be sure that it is no true "sweetheart," not one who loves you dearly that you are walking with, but that you are standing on the very brink of a precipice over which one false step may hurl you into the very depths of sin and ruin. Now I daresay that each of you may be thinking, "I have no fear." Ah, that is just your danger. I once knew two girls—as well brought up as any girls could be who, if I had said anything of this kind to them, would have been ready to answer, as Hazael did, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" and yet before a year had passed, both of them had fallen out of the ranks of good, pure maidens, into those of sin and defilement. I must speak strongly to you. I must say to each one of you here, "Let her" that thinketh "she" standeth, take heed lest "she" fall. Is it not grievous that the true love which God meant to be our greatest blessing in this world, should be mocked by a false love that may be our greatest curse?

'And now having warned you about how careful you must be in choosing your sweetheart, let us turn to the brighter side again; and, supposing you have chosen well and wisely, ask how you are to keep the love you have won. First, I should say, be content with that love and admiration, and do not look beyond. If any other man professes to admire you too, let him feel that it is quite a matter of indifference to you, because of this other

love that you have a right to. Never be tempted to trifle with a good man's affection for the passing amusement of an hour. Some girls seem to delight in teazing a man they love, in pretending to care for some one else, just for "the fun," as they call it, of making him jealous. Ah, it is like playing with edged tools, and you may hurt both yourself and others when you least expect it. Let the man whom you love, rest secure in your love; let him feel, "I can trust her anywhere, and with anyone, because I know she has given me her whole heart."

'Again, to keep a man's love, you must keep his respect, and to keep that, you must never pass the bounds of maiden modesty and reserve, even with him. I daresay you may say, "Ah, but it doesn't matter what I do or say, when we're going to be married." It does matter, and till you are married you must not behave in any kind of way as if you were. A girl who allows a man—even the man she is engaged to to take any liberties with her, or to fail in the politeness which every man owes to a woman-is not the girl to win or to keep a man's respect. Remember that unless you respect yourselves, you cannot expect any one else to do so. Ah, dear girls, I wish I could set before you the picture of what a true maiden should be-so gentle and loving, so pure and modest, not seeking, but being sought,-found out, like the violet among the leaves, rather by her sweetness than her beauty—a maiden of whom all good men would sav. "that is a woman I could love and honour as my wife; a woman I could trust with the happiness

of my home and the bringing up of my children." Such a maiden would, indeed, be herself a "sweetheart," whom a man could both love and respect.

'And now, girls, good-bye, and if you like, I will come again next Sunday.'

'Oh, do, ma'am,' exclaimed the girls, 'and we won't forget your lesson.'

When Mrs. Wykeham got home, she wrote as a memorandum across the paper,—

'Sunday, May 31st.

'Subject.—On Sweethearts.

'Lesson.—Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.'

CHAPTER XIV.

ON SELF-RESPECT.

WHEN Mrs. Wykeham entered the room which was set apart at the Home for the classes next Sunday, she was pleased to see several new faces. 'I see they don't mind listening to my advice,' she thought to herself, 'I only hope they will remember and act upon some of it; but ah! it is so easy to preach and so difficult to practise.'

- 'Well, girls,' she began, when she had seated herherself, 'have you forgotten all I said last Sunday?'
 - 'Oh, no!' they answered.
- 'For you know,' she continued, 'they say that with young people like you, words go in at one ear and out at the other; but you must stop up that second ear and not let all that I have said escape. In my talk with you last Sunday, you may remember that I made use of the expression of "self-respect;" now I thought we would take this for our consideration to-day. I wonder if any of you can tell me the meaning of this expression. When I say, for instance, that a girl has shown some self-respect by behaving in such or such a way, what do I mean?'

'That she has behaved rightly about something, ma'am?' asked a girl at Mrs. Wykeham's side.

'Yes; of course I mean that, because I think we are all agreed that this self-respect is a right and a good thing for a girl to have, but I want you to put its meaning into different words for me.'

But none of the girls could find the words that they wanted.

'Ah! I see what it is,' said Mrs. Wykeham, '"we know, but we can't explain"'-the old story. Well I must try myself. I think if we take self-respect in its best and highest sense, we mean the respect that we each of us owe to ourselves, as being made in God's image, and as having the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. This you will see is very different to what some people would mean by self-respect, for it is often used merely as another name for pride and selfglorification. I will give you two instances to explain the difference. Supposing I see a woman going about like a slattern, with dirty, untidy dress and hair, loitering at the door of her house, her shoes all trodden down, her arms akimbo, gossipping with any of the passers-by, I should say to myself, "That woman must have lost all self-respect, or she would be ashamed to be seen like that;" and I should mean that she had lost the sense of what was due to herself as well as to her neighbours, as regards tidiness, cleanliness, and womanly feeling. If, on the other hand. I hear a respectably dressed woman saving to her neighbour—as I heard one say the other day— "I'm thankful to say that I've always kept myself to myself, and I'm not going to be beholden to anybody:" then I feel inclined to answer, "If you think

keeping yourself to yourself is enough to make you respectable, my friend, you are quite mistaken; and as to being "beholden to anybody," there are none of us, from the cradle to the grave, who can dispense with that. Pride isn't self-respect, or selfishness either."

'But isn't there such a thing, ma'am, as proper pride?' asked one of the girls whom Mrs. Wykeham knew considered herself as rather superior to the others.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'the pride that makes a woman take delight in having her house neat and clean, and her husband's meals well cooked; or the pride that any of you girls might take in a piece of work that you had done well, I should call that a proper pride; but it is not quite the same thing as self-respect.

'Now I fear that you girls who live in towns are sometimes rather apt to be wanting in this particular. Shall I tell you why I think so? Because I have noticed the familiar way you allow young men of your acquaintance to speak to you; because I have seen the conscious look and laugh with which some of you return the glance of any passing stranger in the street, or the way in which you will run the risk of finding yourself in a crowd with no one older to take care of you. I think if you had more of this quality that we are speaking of, I should not see these little signs, which are to me like straws, showing which way the wind blows. A girl who has real self-respect is careful what society she mixes in, and how she goes

about; she does not allow anyone to take liberties or make rude remarks to her.'

'But, please, ma'am, how can we help it?' asked a bright, rather showily dressed girl.

Mrs. Wykeham could not help thinking to herself, as she looked at her, that anyone, with her manner and evident love of attracting notice, would find it rather difficult, but she only answered: 'A girl with a quiet, retiring manner and simple dress, who only "minds her own business," as the saying is, may, I believe, go almost anywhere that it is necessary for her to go, without being spoken to or taken any unpleasant notice of. I am quite certain it depends upon yourselves. If you have this self-respect that we are speaking of, you will know how to come and go without having any remarks made upon you. Even if by chance and not by your own seeking, you should be thrown with any young men, for instance, who seem inclined to be too forward, you can always make them "keep their distance."

'I remember reading a story once of an old nurse, who, when she asked how she got rid at last of a troublesome lover, who, as she said, "wouldn't take no," answered, "Whenever he came, I always used to look just six inches above his head, without answering him;" and that's what I advise you to do if you are in any difficulty of the kind.

'Again, there are other ways in which a girl can show whether she has this self-respect or not. If she allows people to take her to places where she will see sights that a modest girl ought not to look at; if she takes up a paper and reads things that ought never to be put into print, much less read by any young girl; if she goes about with people of doubtful character—in all these cases she not only loses other people's respect, but she forgets what is due to herself as a member of Christ and a child of God. If you remember always, wherever you go and whatever you do, that you are "temples of the Holy Ghost," that will be the true way to preserve your self-respect; then you will try to keep far from you "everything that defileth," whether it be uncleanness of the body or uncleanness of the soul; you will try to keep your eyes from seeing evil sights, your ears from hearing evil words; you will keep your body. as the Catechism tells us, "in soberness, temperance, and chastity." If a woman or a girl once loses this self-respect, she "goes down-hill," as the saying is, very fast indeed. She gradually comes to be quite careless of what other people say or think of her, till at last she loses all sense of blame and shame. I need not draw upon the picture of such an one. You must, most of you, have seen, at least at a distance, some such sad sight as this—it is because I want vou to feel how terrible it is, this loss of all womanly modesty and self-respect, that I thought of speaking to you to-day about it, and of entreating you to beware of the first easy steps which lead to a downward road. Perhaps there is not one of you here now, who would at this moment do anything to make people cry shame on you; but I am equally sure that there is not one of you here who does not need my

warning in a greater or lesser degree, because at your age often mere thoughtlessness is at the root of so much evil.

'I should like each one of you, when you go home, to take up your Bibles and read through, very carefully, the last six verses of the sixth chapter of 1st Corinthians. There St. Paul explains what I spoke of, namely, the respect we owe to ourselves as being made in God's image and having the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Think how that Holy Spirit must grieve as He looks down and beholds the fair image of Himself that God created, defiled both in body and spirit. Think how our blessed Lord must mourn when He sees the souls which He bought at such a price—the price of His own Blood—given back again into the hand of Satan.

'But when I urge you, dear girls, to keep your-selves pure, both in body and soul, you must never forget that it is not of yourselves that you can do so; that you can neither keep your garments undefiled nor wash them clean again when stained by sin, it is to Christ, and to Christ's Blood, that you must look for help and cleansing. Only if you love Him, can you respect His image, and in so doing respect your-selves.

'One word more I must say about the false meaning of self-respect, which we spoke about at first. Never let pride like that take its place in your heart. Never be tempted to say, like the Pharisee, "My God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." If God helps you to keep yourself respectable, do not

turn away with scorn from those whose temptations have been such as you, perhaps, would never have dreamed of. It may be, too, that the sense of having lost the respect of all around them is goading them on to fresh depths of sin. Try if, by loving pity, you may not raise them to newness of life.

'No doubt the Pharisee, who, in his pride, stood aloof from the Publican, would have called that very pride by the name of self-respect; we know what it was in God's sight. There is not one of us, however respectable in the sight of man, who would not need, when standing at God's judgment-seat, to smite upon his breast, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

As Mrs. Wykeham said these words, she rose from her seat, and the girls all got up to go, when one of them, a shy, retiring, little thing of about fifteen, asked if she might stay behind and ask Mrs. Wykeham something.

'Yes; certainly,' said she; 'or, rather, will you walk home with me; and, as I believe you will not be expected back just yet, stay and have a cup of tea, and then we can have a little quiet talk together?'

Mrs. Wykeham said this, knowing that the poor girl had no mother, and only a careless father, who was rather unkind to her.

'I wanted to ask your advice, ma'am, about a situation,' she began, when the cup of tea and the bread and butter were finished. 'Father wants me to take it, and I don't want to.'

'But that's just what I shan't, ma'am; at least, it was the master of the house who wanted to engage me, and he has only an old, bed-ridden mother,' she replied; 'and so I shouldn't have any mistress, so to speak.'

'Then I can only say, more decidedly still,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'that you must not take the place; for this is just one of those situations in which no girl who has any of the self-respect I was speaking of, should place herself. How can you expect to avoid rough ways and words in a house of that kind?'

'Yes, ma'am; that's what I thought; and your words this afternoon made me feel still more vexed about it, but I daren't say "no" to father.'

'Well, I will undertake that,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and, what is more, I will do my best to get you, through the Friendly Society, a proper place for a young girl like you. You know,' she added, smiling, 'what we try and do is to "mother" our girls, and help them to take care of themselves when they have no one to take care of them.'

Accordingly it was not very long before a suitable place was found for Mrs. Wykeham's little, motherless

^{&#}x27;Tell me about it,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'Where is it?'

^{&#}x27;It is at the public-house, ma'am,' she answered.

^{&#}x27;Then I should say at once, Do not take it, unless it is a very quiet, well-conducted one, and you will be under the care of some elderly, motherly woman.'

friend, who long remembered the day on which Mrs. Wykeham had given her not only the cup of tea, but a paper, on which she had written, as a reminder,

'Sunday, June 7th.
'Subject.—On Self-respect.

'Lesson.—Respect yourself, and other people will be sure to respect you.'

CHAPTER XV.

ON DRESS.

- 'SOME of you, I think, are dressmakers; aren't you?' began Mrs. Wykeham next Sunday, when she had seated herself.
- 'Yes, ma'am, I, and I,' answered several girls together; 'and some of us are apprentices to the millinery department,' answered one rather smartly-dressed young person in the corner.
- 'Which means, in other words,' said Mrs. Wykeham, smiling, 'that you learn to make bonnets and hats. Well, perhaps you will be interested then in my subject for to-day, and I shall expect you to tell me something about it this time. It is "On Dress," which, of course, includes the said bonnets, and hats, and caps too sometimes,' she added smiling, and looking across at a girl whom she recognised as a friend's nursery-maid, and whom she had seen lately with about two square inches of lace on her head, which was all that was meant to do duty for a cap.
- 'Well, then, to begin. What were the first dresses made of that we hear anything about?'

There was a pause, and the girls looked rather

puzzled; then one of them, looking up suddenly, answered, 'Oh! why, fig-leaves, of course.'

'And what was the last dress worn at Court made of?'

'Velvet,' 'Silk,' 'Satin,' answered the girls, several at once.

'Well, then, we must choose from between these very different fashions and materials the proper ones for you girls to dress in. Now, every one of us ought to consider three things in our dress. We should be dressed, firstly, according to our station in life; secondly, according to our purses; and, thirdly, according to good taste. To take the first. When I say according to our station, what does that mean?'

'Oh, that we shouldn't dress like the Queen or the Princesses do,' said one girl.

'Yes, and neither should girls whom God has placed in your position try to "dress like a lady," as the saying is. You are none of you likely to try and dress like the Queen in state robes, in purple and ermine, for that would be impossible; but you are often tempted, I see, to dress in things that are not at all becoming to your station, because you see ladies wear them. When I see the imitation laces and faded finery—the cheap feathers and the woollen trimming that is meant to look like fur—then I feel inclined to say, "Ah! all that rubbish is put on to pretend to be what it is not;" but it can't deceive people, and the girl who wears it looks just like a

sham and a pretence herself. She knows she cannot buy costly furs and real laces, and if she could, they would not make her look like a real lady; and yet she is foolish enough to waste her money on cheap imitations that deceive nobody, and make her look like the daw that was dressed out in peacock's feathers. No, girls; whatever you wear, let them be good, useful things that don't pretend to be anything but what they are, and that are suitable to the station of life in which it has pleased God to call you. I should say the same of all imitation jewellery. If you want a brooch, choose ever such a plain one, with no sham about it, for nothing looks so bad as a woman dressed out in bits of coloured glass, set round with gilt tinsel, only fit to catch a baby's eye, or to please some uneducated savage. Dare to be true, whether in words or deeds, in looks or dress. If God had meant you to have costly ornaments, do you not think He would have given you the money to buy them with? If you want a cheap one, go to the garden and pick a rose-bud to put in your dress. What lady, even the Oueen herself, could desire a better one than that? Another way in which girls are sometimes tempted to forget their station in the matter of dress is in copying the fashions, as well as the materials, of a lady's dress. Surely it is foolish enough to see women and girls who have no work to do wearing dresses so tight that they can scarcely move in them; but how doubly foolish in girls who have to earn their own living by work, and whose

power of working all depends upon having their limbs free! I have seen housemaids laced in so tightly that they could scarcely carry upstairs the pail of water, or the heavy tray that they had in their hands. I have seen a girl who had to run a message in a hurry, neither able to hold up her dress, or to run at all, because she had tied back her dress with strings and tapes, just as she had seen her young mistress do. Mind, I don't say that the young mistress was not foolish; I only say that the maid was more so, because to be able to run about and move freely, was all the more necessary to her. It is the same foolish love of "aping their betters," as our grandmothers used to call it, that makes servant-girls choose for their every-day dresses bright colours that will fade directly, or woollen stuffs that will catch the dirt. Why not consider—if you have rooms to sweep and dishes to wash up-whether a print washing-dress will not suit your work best, and keep to it. I am not speaking here only to you girls, who, as dressmakers, have not much housework to do; or to servants in large houses, where print dresses are the rule, but to some of you who live in lodging-houses, or whose work at home makes soap and water a daily necessity.

'We all like to wear dresses that are becoming; don't we?' she added.

- 'Yes, ma'am,' answered the girls.
- 'And do all colours suit the same person alike?'
- 'Oh, no,' they answered.

- 'Well, then,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'in future ask yourselves this question, Does my dress become not only my face and my figure, but does it become my work and my station? Now for the second thing we were to consider in dress. What was it?'
- 'It was to be according to our purses,' answered one of the girls, smiling.
 - 'Well, what does that mean?'
- 'According to the money we've got in them, ma'am,' answered the one whom Mrs. Wykeham had recognised as her friend's nursemaid.
- 'Exactly; now do you all do that?' she continued.
- 'Not always, ma'am,' answered a girl, who was the smartest of the number.
 - 'And so you get into debt?'
 - ' Sometimes, ma'am,' was the answer.
- 'Well, then, you need to remember my rule, for if you are wearing things that you have not money to pay for, you are no better than a thief, I am afraid.'
- 'Oh, but we mean to pay for them some day, ma'am,' said one of the girls.
- 'Yes, but that some day gets put off and off, and until at last, perhaps, the shopman threatens you with the law. Some of you don't pay at all. I knew a girl who left her situation in debt to a tradesman close by, and did not even tell him her address, in the hope that he might not find her out, or be able to go on sending in his bill. I know another girl

who used to dress very smartly, and as I felt sure her wages were not high, I one day asked her mother how she afforded it. "Ah, ma'am," was the answer, "she comes upon me with her bills; and would you believe it, ma'am, she gave twelve shillings for her last bonnet, which is what has to last us at home for a whole week; and I had to pay it too, and that's why Johnnie's feet have been so bad with the chilblains, because I couldn't afford him any boots." Now don't you think that girl ought to have been ashamed of herself?'

'Yes, indeed,' answered the girls in a breath; 'it was too bad.'

'Well, then, take my warning in time, lest you should come to that. Compare your purse with what you want to buy, and don't buy anything that you can't pay for—out of debt is out of danger. If you get into the habit of running into debt now, you may some day find that it has been the ruin, not only of yourself, but of husband and children too. Remember, then, to be dressed according to your purses.

'Next and lastly, though not least, you must be dressed in good taste. Now how can you do that?'

'By not mixing too many colours, ma'am,' answered one of the young dressmakers.

'Yes, that is one rule; another would be, to dress modestly, for dress that is not modest and neat is not in good taste; another is to dress be-

comingly, to choose the colours and the shapes that suit you best; not to buy something, a dress or a bonnet, because you saw some one else look well in it. The same thing does not look well on everybody. A tall thin person could wear a dress that would not be becoming to a short fat one. All these things you must think of before you buy anything. Don't go straight into a shop without exactly knowing what you are come for, and then be persuaded into buying what your better judgment will afterwards tell you was not the right thing.

'Try and remember my three rules, for then, and then only, can you be called "well dressed."

'And now, I am afraid I must say good-bye, for by next Sunday I shall be at home again, and talking to my own girls.'

'Oh, please, ma'am, if you come here again, will you come down to see us?' said the girls, gathering round Mrs. Wykeham. 'Some of the ladies who come here make it so dull; they never talk to us, only read it all out of a book, just as if it was a sermon, and we can't listen a bit; we'd so much rather they'd talk to us as you do. It makes it seem more natural.'

'Well,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, smiling, 'I'll be sure and tell them all so. So good-bye, and don't forget our Sunday lessons.'

'What did you give the girls this Sunday?' asked her friend, when she returned home.

Mrs. Wykeham answered by handing her the week's paper, on which was written,—

- 'Sunday, June 14th.
- 'Subject.—On Dress.
- 'Lesson.—Dress according to your station, your purse, and good taste.'

CHAPTER XVI.

ON TRUTHFULNESS.

'So here we are again,' said Mrs. Wykeham, as she looked round at the girls seated in the favourite window-sills in her room next Sunday; 'and all the better for our holiday, I hope?'

'Oh, yes, ma'am,' they answered.

After telling the girls about the class of Friendly Members that she had been teaching while away, and inquiring a little as to what they had done during their holiday, and how they had found all going on at home, Mrs. Wykeham proceeded: 'Do you remember choosing four subjects for me which I promised to take each in turn?'

- 'Oh, yes, ma'am,' answered Olive; 'you gave us "Trustworthiness" for the first.'
- 'Well, then,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'we will take "Truth" for to-day. Who chose that?'
- 'I did, ma'am,' answered Jane; 'because I never can tell when one may say things that aren't exactly true or not.'
 - 'How do you mean, Jane?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Why, if you please, ma'am, there are what are called "white lies;" are they wrong?'

'It is always wrong to deceive, Jane, and a lie is a lie always, whether we call it white or black. I think if we were to examine, we should generally find that "white lies" might be called "convenient lies;" and it is because we are not willing to "put ourselves out," as the saying is, or get into difficulty, that we try to think lightly of them and excuse ourselves by saying, "Oh! it is only a white lie." Let us, therefore, make up our minds to speak the truth always and on every occasion if we are called upon. But, on the other hand, we are not always obliged to say things that may be true and yet are not necessary to be told at For instance, if you know that your neighbour had done a foolish thing, it would not be necessary or kind of you to go about telling everybody, although it may have been perfectly true; and this brings me to the question of gossip. What does gossip mean?'

'Chattering about other people's concerns, and repeating what's no business of ours, ma'am; isn't it?' asked Rhoda.

'Exactly!' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and it is in gossipping that people are often most tempted to forget the truth. They are not content with saying what their neighbour has done; but what he has often not done. If everybody were to speak the truth, and nothing more than the truth, there would be much less harm done in the world.'

'I remember, ma'am,' said Kitty, 'our clergyman preached a sermon about that once, and said that before we began to repeat stories about other people, we were to ask ourselves three questions.'

- 'And can you remember them?' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Yes, ma'am,' said Kitty; 'I think I can. We were to ask ourselves first if what we were going to say about our neighbour was "obliged to be said."'
- 'That is if it was necessary,' interposed Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Next if it was kind; and, most of all, if it was true,' added Kitty. 'I remember it, because our teacher made us learn those three things afterwards in school.'
- 'And very good advice it was too,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'for if we asked ourselves those questions before speaking, think how all the foolish, and unkind, and untrue stories would be stopped. Now think of another way in which girls like you might be tempted to sacrifice truth.'
- 'If we'd done anything wrong and were afraid to say so when we were asked,' asked Rhoda.
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'for instance, if you had broken or spoilt some of your mistress's things, and tried to hide it or to let it appear, even if you didn't exactly say so, that someone else had done it. I have known servants put the pieces of some china they had broken lightly together, so that when the next person touched it, it fell apart, and they got the blame, instead of the one who had really broken it; that was acting against the spirit of truth,—it was trying to deceive.'

'Then, ma'am,' asked Rhoda, 'another thing which puzzles me is, that sometimes one does tell

a lie without knowing it; is that counted for a sin?'

'Not when there is no intention to deceive, for God looks into our hearts and does not judge by the outside only. If I told you to go and look for such or such a thing, and added you would find it in a certain right-hand drawer; if when you went there, you found it was in the left-hand one, though I had not said what was the truth, yet I shouldn't have been telling you a lie with the intention of deceiving; should I?'

'Oh, no, ma'am; and I see that in anything like that one would not be to blame.'

'So you see,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'in judging of a lie, we must look rather to the spirit than the letter; we must look rather to what is meant than what is actually said. Do you remember about Ananias and Sapphira? Get your Bibles and look. It is in the 5th chapter of Acts, and begins at the 1st verse. They sold, you see, a certain piece of land, and brought part of the price and laid it at the apostles' feet, pretending it was the whole. One of them only acted the lie, the other spoke it; but the punishment was to both alike, because God, who looks into the heart, saw that they had "agreed together to lie to the Holy Ghost."'

'I never understood that before, ma'am,' said Kitty; 'I always thought that Sapphira told a lie, but I never could see that Ananias did, for he only laid the money there and said nothing.'

'So we might have judged, Kitty,' answered Mrs.

Wykeham; 'but God who tries the heart, judged differently. It is a very solemn thought, that however much we may deceive men, we never can deceive God. His eye is ever on us, and "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."'

'What does the Catechism say about truth?' she continued after a pause.

"To be true and just in all my dealings," said Rose, who answered but seldom; but who was evidently listening with great attention.

'Then is it not being untruthful when people have false weights and give short measure?' asked Jane. 'I know one can't trust every one: cook says she makes it a rule to weigh things that come in every now and again.'

'Indeed it is unfortunately so,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and if everybody were perfectly true and just in their dealings, we should not have to measure or weigh things for ourselves, to prevent our being deceived. Then there are other ways in which people deceive; when our milk has water put in it and yet pretends to be all milk; when our tea is adulterated or mixed with copper-filings to make it heavy, or sloe-leaves that look like tea; when our beer has all kinds of messes put into it, we are being deceived by lies that are acted, though not spoken. But it is in other ways than this that Satan will tempt you to be untrue; in a "yes" or a "no," thoughtlessly or hastily spoken; in saying a little more or a little less than the truth; in not being quite open and

straightforward; in these things I beg of you to watch. There is nothing so noble as a man or a woman whose every word you can believe. There is nothing so mean and despicable as a liar, for a liar is a *coward* as well. I can only repeat to you what I said to the girls at the Home the other day—"Dare to be true."

'And now that is enough for to-day, for I want to have a little talk with Rose, for whom I have found a place that I think will just suit her; so she can stay and hear about it.

'When I was away, Rose,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'I heard of a lady who wanted a girl to train under an older servant; she is a kind old maiden lady who lives by herself; and when I told her about you, she promised to try you, and, if your parents are willing, I arranged that you should go there this next week. I think it will be a happy home for you; and as the old lady herself is very infirm, I feel sure you will try and be a gentle, thoughtful, little handmaid. I dare say she will let you do all sorts of little things for her, and I have no doubt you may make yourself a great comfort to her in time. Your work will not be very hard, for you are to look after her room, run her errands, and wait on her; the other servant does most of the housework.'

'I think I shall like that better than being nurse-maid, ma'am,' said Rose.

'I think you will, Rose; and that's why I asked her to try you. She is such a dear, beautiful, old lady,' she continued, 'with white curls round her face, and such a sweet, loving smile.'

'I wonder if she will love me,' thought poor Rose; 'nobody ever does.'

And so it was settled, and Rose went off on the following Thursday to her new home. When she got there, the old lady welcomed her kindly, and said, 'I have no doubt you will suit me, my dear, for any one who has been in Mrs. Wykeham's household cannot help having learnt to be useful.'

'I'm afraid I haven't,' answered Rose, a little bluntly; 'but I'll try, ma'am.'

The next morning Rose was told to wash up the cups and saucers after breakfast, and having got together her bowl of water and cloths she set to work. She had not been used to washing up at Mrs. Wykeham's; but she did not like to say so, and set about it rather awkwardly, thinking, 'Well, it's easy enough, anyhow.'

Scarcely had the thought passed through her mind, when crash went one of the best tea-cups, slipping right out of her hand on to the pantry floor.

'Oh, dear!' cried poor Rose; 'what shall I do?' Instantly the words came into her mind, 'Dare to be true,' and gathering up the pieces, she ran and knocked at the old lady's door, saying, as she answered, 'Come in;' 'Oh! please, ma'am, I've gone and broken one of the best cups, and Mrs. Wykeham said I was to tell you!'

'Mrs. Wykeham?' said the old lady; 'why is she here?' forgetting in her astonishment the broken teacup.

'Oh, no, ma'am,' answered Rose; 'but it was last Sunday's lesson;' and so saying she took out of her pocket the slip of paper on which Mrs. Wykeham had written down for her:—

'Sunday, June 21st.

'Subject.—On Truthfulness.

'Lesson.—Dare to be true.'

CHAPTER XVII.

ON FORGETFULNESS.

- 'WE shall only be short in our number for one Sunday,' said Mrs. Wykeham, looking round on the girls, when next they met, 'for by next Sunday the new under laundry-maid will have come, and she will no doubt like to take Rose's place. I wonder if she will find us a subject.'
- 'I should think it would be on washing, then, ma'am,' said Kitty, laughing.
- 'Well, it wouldn't be a bad one,' answered her mistress; 'for no one can have too much of soap and water, and I sometimes think you all have too little. By-the-by have you kept an account of the subjects and lessons in those books I gave you?'
- 'Yes, ma'am, we have,' answered Olive; 'we write them down when we leave you—before we go to tea.'
- 'That's right,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'for all my preaching will be in vain if you don't remember and practise. It was my turn for a subject to-day, as I took yours last. So I sent down those slips of paper that I see you have there. What's on yours, Kitty?'

- "No more head than a pin," ma'am; and I'm sure I don't know what subject that is.'
 - 'And yours, Olive?'
 - 'I quite forgot!' answered Olive.
- 'And mine is, "A knot in your pocket-handker-chief," said Jane.
- 'And mine—oh dear! I quite forgot to bring it,' said Rhoda, 'but I know what was written on it—"Try and remember."
- 'Well, it just suited you, at any rate,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'Now out of all these mottoes, as we will call them, what will my subject be?'
 - 'About forgetting, I expect,' said Kitty.
- 'Exactly; "On Forgetfulness." Girls do sometimes forget—don't they?' added Mrs. Wykeham, glancing with a smile over at Rhoda.
- 'I think we always forget, somehow,' said Kitty; 'but I don't know how it is.'
- 'Well, we will consider, first, What makes us forget; and, secondly, What will prevent our forgetting. What makes you forget, Kitty? and obliges cook to tell me, as she did last week, "She's no more head than a pin!"'
- 'I can't keep my thoughts together, ma'am, somehow,' answered Kitty.
- 'By which I suppose you mean,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'that you are thinking now about one thing, now about another, just as they happen to strike you, and one thought drives away the other out of your head. Strangely enough,' she added, smiling, 'I've

felt that sort of thing the matter with me sometimes. I wonder if everybody has.

'What makes you forget, Olive? I think I must answer for you. You are always in the clouds. I don't know whether you get into fairy-land or dream-land, but you are not here in this work-a-day world. Nurse tells me she has sometimes to call you several times before you answer,' said Mrs. Wykeham, who had noticed, with some anxiety, this growing dreaminess of Olive's. 'Now for you, Jane?'

'I think of things just after it's too late,' answered she.

'Well, we must find some remedy for that. Now for you, Rhoda?' she continued.

'I'm afraid I'm like Kitty—my head gets in a muddle, ma'am,' answered Rhoda.

'So then we must put down as follows: The things that make us forget are, "being in a muddle," "dreaming," and "not looking ahead," which seems to be Jane's mistake. Now, to prevent "being in a muddle," what can we do?"

'I don't know, ma'am,' answered Kitty and Jane.

'I should say, "Arrange in your mind what you have got to remember and learn it by heart," answered Mrs. Wykeham. I find that is the only way I can do. I say to myself, for instance, "I've got to remember to-day, firstly, to order some soup for So-and-so, who is ill in the village; secondly, I've got three notes to write; and, thirdly, I've got to prepare the subject for the girls next Sunday;" or, perhaps, that is part of a

morning's work, and I have to think of a quantity more in the afternoon. Well, first, I arrange it, and then I write it down or learn it. If you can't write it down or learn it, "make a knot in your pocket-hand-kerchief," or tie a piece of thread round your finger, as my old nurse used to.'

'Oh, did she?' exclaimed Olive. 'So does mother.'

'Anything to fix it in your mind,' continued Mrs. Wykeham. 'I know a lady who changes her rings to remember things by. Well, try then not to be in a muddle, and to arrange both your thoughts and your work. Now, what shall we tell Olive to do to cure herself of dreaming?'

'I never dream,' said Kitty. 'I don't sit still long enough, so I can't tell what it is like.'

'No, Kitty,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'you're too like a parched pea in a frying-pan for anyone to accuse you of dreaming. I think, Olive,' she continued, 'whenever you feel yourself going off into a dream, you should get up and do something—ever so little—just to keep your thoughts down here, out of dreamland. I do not mean,' she added, reverently, 'that your thoughts should not soar upwards to reach God and His Holy Land, but not stay in a dream-land of fancy.'

Mrs. Wykeham, as she spoke, looked lovingly across at Olive, about whom she felt a growing uneasiness. There did not seem anything exactly the matter with the girl, but somehow she had altered of late.

'Now for Jane's turn. She confesses that she has

what the French call, "the spirit of the staircase," which means that if you wanted to say something to your friend, it would be sure not to occur to you till he was half-way down-stairs on his way home. Jane remembers things, only just a minute or two too late. How can she cure that?'

'By what you said, ma'am?' asked Rhoda. '"By looking ahead?"'

'Just so,' replied Mrs. Wykeham; 'and by saying to herself, as I told you to, "What have I got to remember?" and then when she puts her hand in her pocket and feels that knot in her pocket-handkerchief, it will remind her just in time; only don't do, as a friend of mine used to. He always made his knot—two, three knots, sometimes—in the pocket-handkerchief, and then, when he took it, couldn't for the life of him remember what those knots were for.'

'Some people have naturally a good memory, and some not; haven't they, ma'am?' asked Olive.

'Certainly; you have heard of people who could repeat a whole page of the *Times* by heart after having once read it. Others, who could repeat chapter after chapter in the Bible; but though we may not have such wonderful memories as that, we may all make the best of what we have, and often make it better by practice. You know a child gets to learn things quickly by heart, after constant practice. I have no doubt that you who are not used to it would take a long time to learn a hymn or chapter of the Bible.'

^{&#}x27;Olive wouldn't,' answered Kitty.

- 'Oh, no!' replied Mrs. Wykeham, 'I forgot that Olive teaches the children their hymns and knows most of them by heart herself; but you others would.'
- 'Yes, indeed,' answered Rhoda; 'I haven't learnt anything for years.'
- 'Well, suppose you try now, then,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'and learn the Sermon on the Mount for me by next Sunday: I mean the twelve Beatitudes, as they are called.'
 - 'Yes; we will,' answered the girls.
 - 'I nearly know those already,' added Olive.
- 'Then you can learn something else. I do not ask you usually to learn things for me, because I don't want to make these Sunday talks burdensome to you, but I should like you to do so, now and then; for some day you may be thankful to have some texts stored away in your minds.'
- 'I remember reading a story of a prisoner who had his Bible taken away from him,' said Olive, 'and he told his persecutors that they could not really take it away, because it was all written on his heart. He meant he had learnt it all at different times.'
- 'And I have heard, too,' added Mrs. Wykeham, 'of blind people, to whom the texts learnt in former days were the greatest help and comfort. Well, now, we have pretty well said our say, about "forgetfulness," I think; so next time any of you forget, ask yourself, whether you "tied any knot in your pockethandkerchief?" by which I mean, whether you really tried to remember? and if not, punish your memory by making it learn a little scrap of something instead.

- 'And now, off with you; for, see, it is a lovely day, and you must get a walk before tea.'
- 'What shall we write in our books, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
 - 'This, I think,' said Mrs. Wykeham:

'Sunday, June 28th.

- 'Subject.—On Forgetfulness.
- 'Lesson.—Learn to Remember.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON HONESTY.

'I CAN'T think what's the matter with Olive, nurse,' said Mrs. Wykeham next day. 'I think that going home seems to have done her harm instead of good. She was not looking strong before, but now she seems so very ailing, and I don't like that cough of hers.'

'No more do I, ma'am,' answered nurse; 'and I've begged her to speak to you about it. I think when she was home she caught cold, and was more ill with it, than she will say.'

'Well, I'll ask her about it,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'We were just speaking about you,' she said, as Olive at that moment entered the nursery. 'Nurse and I think that you've not been looking well for some time past, and we want to know if you are feeling particularly out of sorts.'

'Oh, ma'am!' cried Olive, bursting into tears, 'I know I ought to have told you before, but I couldn't bear to, for fear you would send me home again altogether.'

'Well, what is it, Olive?' said Mrs. Wykeham, kindly; 'you know that we would do anything for

you, and like you too much to want to send you away without reason.'

'Oh, ma'am!' continued Olive, sobbing in a way that was very unusual to her, and which showed Mrs. Wykeham that she was indeed 'out of sorts.'

'When I was home I took a chill, and I was in bed nearly all the time and had the doctor. He said I ought not to go out to service again anywhere; but when he heard that I was with you, he said that you would be as good as a mother to me, and that the food I got here would be so much better than what mother could get for me, and so—and so,' sobbed poor Olive. 'I came back again and said nothing about it, I thought it wouldn't matter to anybody but myself.'

'Yes, Olive,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, gently, 'it did matter to us all, and it was not quite honest of you; but I don't mean to scold you, my poor child, for that won't be good medicine for you. We will have the doctor here again, and he shall tell me what he thinks had better be done.'

Accordingly, next day the doctor came, and having sounded Olive, pronounced, much to Mrs. Wykeham's sorrow, that her lungs were decidedly affected, and that only the greatest care would prevent her from going into a decline.

'What had I better do, then?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.

'I should say,' replied the doctor, 'that the children here would be too much for her in her present weak state of health, and that she had better

go to some warmer place, or to her mother; only then there is the difficulty about food.'

'Oh! I will see to that,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and arrange that she shall have dinners regularly from the Cottage Hospital while she is at home.'

And so it was settled.

'You see, Olive,' said Mrs. Wykeham to her, 'as long as you are here, the children are sure to forget and make you run about after them: whereas if you go home and get a proper rest, we hope you will come back again more like yourself.'

Mrs. Wykeham did not dare to add, 'and soon get quite well,' for she knew too much of the sad disease which had attacked Olive, and how rapidly it had made progress during the last few weeks to have much hopes of seeing her quite well again.

'You can take this little present from me to your mother to get any little things the doctor orders,' said Mrs. Wykeham, next day, as she stood at the door, surrounded by the children who had come to take a last look at their 'dear Olly.'

First the box was lifted up, then Olive, into the cart, and as it slowly drove away from the door, 'Come back quick, Olive,' cried out the children; 'Tum back tick, Olly!' echoed baby.

Ah, they little knew that their dear 'Olly' would never come back to them any more.

Sunday had come, and the girls (including the new under-laundrymaid, Selah) were gathered as usual, only without Olive, in Mrs. Wykeham's room.

- 'My subject for to-day,' she began, 'is Honesty, which you remember was the last on your paper, You must soon find me out some more,' she added, smiling; but the girls noticed that it was rather a sad smile, and that Mrs. Wykeham seemed to find it a harder matter than usual to begin.
- 'Well, what have you got to say about it?' she inquired. 'Nothing? Ah! the truth is, we are all feeling the want of Olive, and are rather dull, I suppose.'
- 'Yes, we do miss her,' answered the girls with tearful faces, for they, too, had a suspicion that Olive was not coming back again soon.
- 'However, we must put away sad thoughts, and try and find out a little about this said "Honesty." What does it mean?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Not to steal or to take anything that isn't ours,' answered Rhoda.
- 'Yes; and do you think that is a sin into which any of you are likely to fall?' she continued.
 - 'No, ma'am,' answered Kitty, promptly.
- 'Wait a bit and see,' said Mrs.Wykeham; 'there are many things we may steal almost without knowing it.'
- 'How, ma'am?' asked Rhoda. 'Surely we can't steal anything—that is, take it away—without knowing it.'
- 'Did you ever steal anyone's love?' asked Mrs. Wykeham, 'or anyone's character?'
 - 'Not that I know of,' said Jane.
 - 'Nor I either,' answered Kitty.

Rhoda was silent.

'Well, Rhoda, and you?'

But Rhoda only blushed, and said, 'I am not so sure, ma'am; but I can't tell.'

Rhoda was thinking of a day long ago—at least it seemed so to her—when a very angry voice had cried out, 'I call it a mean thing to take away anyone's character by spreading such reports.'

The story was this: Rhoda had thoughtlessly repeated to a fellow-servant some unkind reports about a certain girl she knew. This fellow-servant had again repeated to her mistress what she had heard, and the consequence was that the lady, who had before intended to engage the girl as kitchen-maid, now decided not to do so, on hearing such a character of her. All these reports had, however, turned out to be untrue; but it was a long time before the poor girl's character recovered from the effects of Rhoda's unkindness. Her fellow-servant had been very indignant about it, so that all Rhoda had got for her pains had been the above angry words from her former friend. It had been a bitter lesson, but she had learned, at any rate, how a few thoughtless words may steal away what is more valuable than money.

'We can steal love,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, not willing to press the question, 'we can steal character, we can steal time.'

'Oh, I know about time! Mrs. Banks told me once,' said Jane; 'she said if I dawdled and idled away the time for which my mistress paid me I was no better than a thief.'

- 'We can steal in many different ways,' went on Mrs. Wykeham, 'and I do not think there is one of us who does not need to be on their guard. Even the other day I was obliged to tell Olive that she had not been honest.'
 - 'Olive?' exclaimed all the girls in a breath.
- 'Yes, Olive; but it was rather a different kind of honesty that she had been wanting in—she had not the honesty to tell me at once that she had been ill when at home, and was not fit for her work. I should have gone on paying her wages for work that she was not able to do, if nurse and I had not seen it in time, and thus she would have injured not only herself but me. For to be honest you must not only not steal from your neighbour, but you must give him what is his due. "Owe no man anything," says St. Paul, and that is a part of honesty.'
- 'Men or women who do not pay their debts are dishonest: people who do not keep their promises are dishonest as well as dishonourable. You see in all these subjects we must look deeper than the surface, and read not only the letter but the spirit of the law. One of Satan's devices is to make people think, "Oh, I am not likely to fall in to this or that sin! I am not likely to steal my neighbour's goods, or to murder him, or to bear false witness." No, you may not be, but you may be likely to steal something as valuable, to give way to anger, or to say what is not strictly true. It is in little things as I often tell you that we need to watch, for Satan always tries to get the thin end of the wedge in, as we

- say. A great poet says, "An honest man's the noblest work of God," but I do not suppose he meant merely a man who did not steal, but one who was upright and honourable—one who rendered to every man his due, from honour to—farthings,' Mrs. Wykeham added, with a smile.
- 'And now I'm not going to keep you any longer, for we are none of us in good spirits for a talk, and I should like Selah to go out and see the garden, as she is a new comer.
- 'By-the-by, Selah,' she added, looking up at the tall, strong girl before her, 'how did you come by your name?'
- 'Mother opened the Bible to see what would come uppermost,' answered she, 'and it was in the Psalms, "Selah."'
- 'Oh, I know!' said Kitty: 'at the end of each chapter. Here is my book, ma'am,' she added.

'Sunday, July 5th.

'Subject.—On Honesty.

'Lesson.—Owe no man anything.'

CHAPTER XIX.

ON CHRISTIAN NAMES.

'Well, Nurse,' said Mrs. Wykeham, a day or two later, 'I have at last found some one to supply Olive's place during the next few weeks, till we see how she is, and whether she gets any better.'

'I am very glad of it, ma'am,' answered nurse, 'for I can hardly manage alone.'

'She is the pupil-teacher,' continued Mrs. Wykeham: 'and as the holidays are now going on, she can very well come and will help to teach the elder ones and keep them quiet. Her name is rather a curious one; I don't know what baby will make of it. It is Thirza.'

'Well, that is a name one doesn't hear often hereabouts, ma'am,' answered nurse, 'but in our village at home nearly all the boys and girls had Bible names. Selah, you know, comes from my old parish, and her brother is called Jeremiah; and well I remember him, and a proper pickle he was, too,' she added.

'Yes, Selah was telling us only last Sunday how their mother chose their names,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, as she left the room. Baby did make a mess of it sure enough, and poor Thirza she insisted on calling 'Coor.'

'I suppose,' said Master Charlie, 'as she is always "cooing" herself, she thinks it a very good name to give Thirza.'

Thirza was very different from Olive, and, partly from that fact and partly because she was what the other girls called 'set up,' did not seem to be very popular. She was slight and pretty, with a bright colour and very blue eyes, rather high-spirited and fond of attracting notice. In fact, one reason why Mrs. Wykeham had her up to the house was that she might get to know her, and possibly be of use to her, for she felt that with such good looks, joined to a love of admiration and the liberty she had as a pupil-teacher out of school hours, she might very easily get into mischief.

'What do you think was the reason I chose the subject of Christian names for this Sunday?' began Mrs. Wykeham.

'I know, ma'am,' answered Kitty; 'because Thirza and Selah have two such curious ones, and we were all saying so. I think they're nice, though,' she added, as if afraid she might have hurt the other girls' feelings, 'because no one else has them. Now I know plenty of "Kittys," and "Janes," and "Marys."'

'Do you know,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'that every Christian name means something?'

'No, we didn't,' answered the girls. 'Why, what

- can "Selah" mean? We thought it was the name of somebody whom David spoke about, said Jane.
- 'No, it isn't,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'if you get your Bibles and look, you will find it at the end of some of the verses in the Psalms.'
- 'Oh, I've found it!' exclaimed Kitty. 'It is over and over again in the third Psalm.'
- 'Yes,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and in many others, such as the ninth and the twenty-fourth. The word is supposed to be put there to show that when the Psalms were being sung, a pause was to be made after that particular verse, probably to draw attention to some specially beautiful thought that those who sang it might pause and 'take it in,' as we say. So Selah's name must tell her to "stop and think sometimes," when her spirits are likely to carry her away, for instance, or when she is tempted through good-nature to be persuaded into doing something very foolish,' added Mrs. Wykeham, looking across at her round merry face, and thinking as she did so that the caution might be needful sometimes.
 - 'And what does my name mean?' asked Jane.
- 'Well, I really don't know, for I could not find it, in the book I looked in yesterday, and where I found the others,' says Mrs. Wykeham. 'I was thinking mostly then of Bible names, and I found the meaning of many of those in the Concordance. Katharine wasn't there either, of course, so I can't be sure about Kitty's, but I think it comes from a Greek word that means "purity."

- "Olive," you know suggests "peace to us," because the olive-branch was the sign of peace."
- 'Oh, I know, ma'am!' said Rhoda, 'the dove out of the ark brought an olive-branch in its mouth, didn't it?'
 - 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'What does Rhoda mean, ma'am? do you know?' asked Selah.
- 'Yes. "Rhoda" means "a rose," so you must be as "sweet" as a rose. "Thirza," or "Tirza," as it was spelt formerly, is a Jewish name, and its meaning is "benevolent" or "pleasing." Names are taken from all kinds of languages, and have all kinds of meanings. My name of "Rachel" has a very funny one; it means a "sheep."

As Mrs. Wykeham said this, both she and the girls joined in a hearty laugh.

- 'I hope I am not like the "silly sheep" that we all hear so much of. What good quality can I borrow from a sheep, I wonder?'
- 'Well, it's useful, at least as mutton, ma'am,' said Jane very gravely, whereupon all the girls burst out laughing again.
- 'There's no denying that is there,' answered Mrs. Wykeham with a smile. 'I may perhaps be contented with learning a lesson of usefulness from my name. I daresay, though, that "Rachel" may have been first used as a name of endearment, just as I have heard a mother call her child "my little lamb." It would come very naturally from the lips of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, with

their flocks and herds of sheep, whom with the children that were tender, Jacob said must "be led softly;" and his own wife Rachel, as a girl you remember, kept her father's sheep—herself, no doubt, the most cherished lamb of the fold.'

- 'I never should have thought,' said Selah, 'that there could be so much to say about a name. I didn't know a bit what mine meant, though mother told me how she chanced upon it.'
- 'But we haven't done yet,' says Mrs. Wykeham; 'for why are our Christian names so called? I mean,' she added, seeing the girls did not quite understand her question, 'why is my first called my "Christian name," and my second my "surname?"'
- 'Because,' answered Kitty, 'our first names are given us at our baptism, when we are made members of Christ.'
- 'Exactly,' replied Mrs. Wykeham, 'so that our Christian name, besides having a meaning of its own, ought always remind us of our baptismal promise, "to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto our lives' end."
- 'Our surname shows that we are one of an earthly family, bearing the name of an earthly father. Our Christian name should show that we are one of a heavenly family, bearing the name of a heavenly Father.
- 'To bear the name of Christian ought to be to us a higher honour than if we bore the noblest name on earth.'

- 'Can you tell us the meaning of any other Christian names? I should so much like to know,' asked Kitty.
- 'Well, you may try me, and see,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but I can only tell you the meanings of what I call Bible names, I think.'
 - 'Well, "Mary," ma'am,' asked Rhoda.
- 'Mary, the name of our blessed Lord's mother, means, I believe, "Exalted;" at least it is one of its meanings; and is, indeed, a fit name for her who, though meek and lowly in heart, was exalted to the highest honour ever granted to woman. Now it is your turn, Jane, to ask.'
- "Sarah" is that a Bible name, ma'am? Oh! of course it is, she added; 'I forgot.'
- 'Sarah means "lady," or "princess;" so sometimes that would not be quite appropriate—would it? But however lowly might be the work of a "Sarah," she could always be noble at heart. Now you, Thirza?'
- 'I've got a friend called Priscilla, ma'am; she's a nursemaid. What does that mean?'
- 'It means "ancient," I remember,' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'Then,' put in Kitty, saucily, 'I'm sure she must be an old maid.'
 - 'What is your choice, Selah?'
 - "Susan," ma'am; that's mother's name."
- 'I don't remember that,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'but I'll look and see.' So saying, she took down a book from the book-shelf, and turning over the

leaves, answered presently, 'I find Susanna here, which, I suppose, has the same meaning, and it is "a lily," or "joy;" so you could choose which you like best. Who hasn't chosen now?'

'I haven't,' said Kitty, a little abashed at no notice having been taken of her saucy remark. 'Please, I'll choose "Ruth," ma'am.'

'That means "filled," or "satisfied;" and now you must be satisfied too,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'for I can't talk any more this afternoon about Christian names, for it must be quite time for us to break up. There is just one word more I should like to say, though,' she added, 'about a certain kind of name called a "nickname."

As Mrs. Wykeham said this, Kitty blushed a little.

'I heard the other day,' she continued, 'a voice calling out, "Ask Humpty-dumpty, she'll know." I could tell pretty well whose the voice was, and it was only in fun, I could hear; but supposing "Humpty-dumpty," whoever she was, didn't like to be called by that nickname, it wouldn't have been kind—would it?'

'Oh, I know, ma'am,' said Kitty; 'but it really was only in fun, and Selah is as round as a ball. Now, aren't you, Selah?'

'It isn't the first time I've been called by that name, Kitty,' answered Selah, good-humouredly, and I don't mind it a bit; but one of my sisters used to be called "Daddy-long-legs" at school, and she couldn't bear that, and it was unkind of them to go on with it when they saw it made her cry.'

'Well, then, don't give nicknames, or use them,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'because it often hurts people's feelings more than you think; for we aren't all so good-natured as Selah. And now what shall we write for this day, I think it must be this—see,—

' Sunday, July 12th.

' Subject.—On Christian Names.

' Lesson.—Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.'

CHAPTER XX.

ON QUARRELLING.

THE girls had been too busy, they said, the last week, to think of any subject, so Mrs. Wykeham had chosen her own for the next Sunday's lesson, and this was how it had come about. She had heard Rhoda speaking in a very angry tone to the new nurserymaid, Thirza, and an equally angry answer from her in reply; and going up to see what was the matter, she found them in high discussion, in which the words, 'I will' and 'you shan't,' 'I shall' and 'you won't,' seemed to be the chief ones.

- 'Girls—girls!' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'what is all this quarrelling about?'
- 'Well, ma'am,' said Thirza, 'she won't lend me her broom; and how am I to sweep out the nursery?'
- 'Olive didn't use Rhoda's brooms, did she?' asked Mrs. Wykeham. 'I had a housemaid's cupboard made for her on purpose, that she should always have her dusters and brooms at hand.'
- 'I know you did, ma'am,' exclaimed Rhoda; 'and that's just what I said; and she's gone and lost the carpet-broom, somehow; and just because she won't

take the trouble to look for it, she comes and takes mine.'

'Then, if Rhoda were a little more obliging, and Thirza a little less careless, there needn't have been all these words about it,' said Mrs. Wykeham. 'You, Rhoda, lend Thirza your broom for half-an-hour; and when you, Thirza, have swept the nursery, just go and look for your own till you find it; and don't let me hear anything of this sort again, either of you.'

But the matter of the broom had not been the only point of dispute, and somehow, Rhoda, who, as I have said before, liked her own way, and Thirza, who was high-spirited and quick-tempered, were constantly falling out.

'I see I must give them a regular talking to about it,' thought Mrs. Wykeham, 'or we shall have no peace.'

'It takes two to make a quarrel,' she began, the following Sunday; 'how many does it take to make one up? Ah! that's a harder question, isn't it? Sometimes it takes the efforts of two whole lifetimes; sometimes it can never be made up at all. Quarrelsome words may be likened to little sparks which light up a raging fire. Where did you go on Friday, girls?'

'Oh, we all went up to the woods for our picnic, ma'am,' answered Kitty.

- 'Well, and what did you do there?'
- 'We had our dinner, and made a fire.'
- 'Well, it was that fire I was thinking of; you told me that you lit it at first with only some little bits of

stick and dried thistles, didn't you, and that to your astonishment, you found it burnt so fiercely, especially when you put on some dried furze, that you could hardly put it out again in time to be back by tea.'

'Oh, yes, ma'am,' answered Kitty, 'it blazed up like anything, all in a minute, and quite frightened us. The flames were as high as our heads, and a great deal higher, and yet there seemed so little in dry thistles and furze to burn like that.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'words are just like those dry thistle-heads, and when they are set alight by anger, they blaze up into a fire that almost frightens us ourselves.'

'Now, I have heard words flying about, this past week, among some of you, that reminded me of sparks among thistle-heads; and as I don't want a blaze, I think we had all better look to it, eh, Rhoda? How can we prevent quarrelling, do you think? Now I want an answer from each of you.'

'By being pleasant and obliging,' said Rhoda, blushing.

'By a soft answer,' said Jane.

'By not wanting everything our own way,' faltered Thirza.

'By not saying anything,' said Kitty.

'That, Kitty, might do sometimes; but sometimes, on the other hand,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'it might add fuel to the flames. What do you say, Selah?'

'I should go out of the room, if anyone wanted to quarrel with me, ma'am,' remarked Selah, 'it makes one so hot.' At this the girls laughed; but decided that it wouldn't always be possible to follow Selah's plan.

'Well, we are all agreed then, that there are ways of putting out the sparks of anger before they grow to a fire, aren't we? so I hope you will try some of them next time.'

'But people are so aggravating, sometimes,' said Thirza, 'that one feels as if one couldn't give in. If they would, I would,' she added, evidently thinking of several of her late quarrels with Rhoda. 'It seems so unjust.'

'That is generally because we are too obstinate, answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and too certain that we must be in the right.'

'Well, the other day,' began Thirza, 'Rhoda wouldn't-----'

'Never mind, Thirza, about Rhoda; we don't come here on Sunday afternoons to tell tales of each other. Next time you feel angry about anything, and quite certain that you are in the right, and that you are being treated most unkindly and most unfairly, just try what I should call "shelving" your quarrel for a week, and then take it down from the shelf and look at it again, you will be astonished to see how it has shrunk away in the time. Why, ten chances to one, as you look at it again, you will say to yourself, "well, after all, it wasn't worth making such a fuss about; it didn't matter so very much either way, after all." Sometimes, in former days, people used to come to me with complaints or quarrels, and my answer to them always was: "Don't tell me any more about it

now; but come again in a week, and I will listen to it all and tell you what I think about it." I need hardly add, that generally when the week was out, they "had made it up again;" and "it wasn't worth mentioning." All this time, of course, I am talking of the little sparks, the first beginnings of the fire, not the deadly enmity that lasts a lifetime; but the little disputes and differences that I have heard spoken of as "storms in a tea-pot," and disturb our home peace and quiet. A really quarrelsome person who is always finding something to "fly out about," always taking offence where none is meant, is a person sure to be shunned and disliked. I once thought of choosing for you the subject of "Making Allowances." If you would learn how to do that, and get into the way of doing it, there would not be many quarrels in this house. You must all have heard some goodnatured person before now, say, when anybody had been, what Selah called "aggravating," some such thing as this: "Oh, poor thing, she meant no harm; she didn't intend to say anything unkind, I'm sure; only she has a sharp way with her." That's the kind of thing I mean by making allowances. "thinks no evil;" and therefore "is not easily provoked." And now, girls, try all of you to remember the different ways we have found out of stopping strife; for, as I said before, we never know "how great a matter a little fire may kindle."'

So saying, Mrs. Wykeham rose from her seat, and, as the girls were leaving the room, she added, 'By-the-by, you shall each write out for me three

texts about quarrelling, or strife. I think Solomon alone will provide you with plenty.'

'Selah's texts are the best, as I should have expected,' said Mrs. Wykeham to herself, next day, as she looked over the girl's papers. 'And this last one is certainly so appropriate that I shall enter it for the Sunday's lesson.' So saying, she took out her notebook and wrote:

'Sunday, July 19th.

'Subject.—On Quarrelling.

'Lesson.—A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.'

CHAPTER XXI.

ON SICKNESS.

'I HAVE had a letter from Olive's mother, that makes me very anxious about her,' said Mrs. Wykeham next morning to Nurse.

'She writes that her eldest son is dangerously ill with low fever, and the doctor strongly advises her sending Olive away; for in her state of health, the fever, though it is not exactly catching, might attack her too. I can't very well have her back here, for the children's sake, for one is always afraid of anything in the way of fever.'

'No, indeed, ma'am! dearly as I love Olive, I couldn't have those blessed children exposed to anything infectious, that I couldn't!' exclaimed nurse, fervently, 'with the baby and all!' she added.

'Well, nurse; I have resolved on one thing; to go over and see for myself, and consult with Olive's mother about it; for if anything should happen to her, I should be miserable.'

So, accordingly, Mrs. Wykeham drove off to the station, and after a short railway journey and a longer drive, found herself set down at the door of Olive's

mother's house. It was a little cottage, standing high up, overlooking the common, and not far from the church.

Mrs. Wykeham got out of the fly, unfastened the latch of the little wooden gate, and stooping under the archway of closely-clipped laurel that formed the porch, knocked at the door. It was opened by a pleasant-faced, middle-aged woman, neatly dressed in brown linsey, with white cap and apron, whom Mrs. Wykeham at once knew to be Olive's mother. She saw at her first glance how careworn she looked, and noticing also the black lines under her eyes, she said, 'I'm come to see if I can help you, Mrs. Spencer. You do indeed look sadly worn out!'

'Indeed I am; ma'am!' she replied. 'What with want of sleep, and being so anxious; for I've been up night after night with Bill, and now here's Olive, I fear, sickening for the same fever.'

'Oh, dear!' exclaimed Mrs. Wykeham, 'that's the very thing I was dreading.'

'Yes, ma'am,' answered her mother, 'and so was I; and what's to be done, I don't know.'

At this moment the doctor's gig drove up. 'Well, Mrs. Spencer!' he cried out cheerfully, 'how's my patient doing? On the mend, I hope?'

'Bill is, thank you, sir; but Olive's sickening now, I fear!'

On hearing this, the doctor at once proceeded upstairs. There he found that their fears were but too true. 'There is only one thing to be done,' he said. 'She cannot possibly stay in this miserable attic; and

you say Bill and the children have the other rooms, and can't be moved?'

'No, sir, that they can't; there's too many of them, and this is all the room I have left,' said Mrs. Spencer.

'Then Olive must be taken up to the Cottage Hospital, for there she can have a good room and good nursing. She must go at once, too, before the fever develops itself further,' answered the doctor.

In a few minutes he had wrapped Olive up in a large blanket, and carried her down the steep stairs to Mrs. Wykeham's fly, which was standing at the gate. Mrs. Wykeham got in beside her, and putting her arm round her for support, for she seemed so weak she could scarcely sit up, they were driven off to the Cottage Hospital, which was some half-mile off, upon the Heath.

Olive's mother could not leave Bill, so that Mrs. Wykeham had promised to see Olive comfortably settled up there. The Hospital was an old-fashioned looking cottage, half hidden by the creepers on the walls, and standing a little back from the road in an orchard of its own. It was only the temporary one; for just opposite were rising from the ground the walls of the new building. Mrs. Wykeham, bidding someone hold the horse, got the driver to lift Olive out of the fly wrapped in her blanket, and carry her up the little path through the open door, where the matron—a kind motherly-looking woman—was already waiting for them, and straight up-stairs into a little white-washed bed-room, hung with coloured pictures.

- 'I have put Olive into this room,' said the matron, because it is smaller and more comfortable than the large one, where there are four beds. Olive can have one of these two, and I will come and sleep here with her, as there is no one else at present in the house.' So saying, she went down-stairs to get the few things that had been left in the fly, while Mrs. Wykeham proceeded at once to undress Olive and get her into bed. She softly brushed out her hair, pulled off her shoes and stockings, and, having got her quite ready, saw her step into the little white bed prepared for her.
 - 'Now, Olive,' she said, 'isn't that comfortable?'
- 'Oh, it is indeed!' said poor Olive, 'only my head is so bad and I'm so thirsty.'
- 'Well, lie here,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and I'll get something for you to drink.'

While the matron was gone to warm up some broth for Olive—for she seemed quite faint for want of food—Mrs. Wykeham went in the little sitting-room to wait for the doctor, who had promised to come on at once. Hearing a knock at the door, she went to open it herself, but found that instead of the doctor it was the clergyman of the village, Mr. Porter.

'I heard you were here,' he began, after having shaken hands, 'and I came up with a message from my wife to beg you would come across to our house and stay over Sunday, as it is not possible for you to get home to-night till so late.'

'I will thankfully accept your offer,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'and telegraph home accordingly.'

This would be good news to Olive; so Mrs. Wykeham, accompanied by Mr. Porter, presently went up-stairs again to tell her. Olive had dozed off into an uneasy sleep, so Mrs. Wykeham asking Mr. B—to come again to-morrow, sat down by her bed. As she looked at Olive's flushed face and felt the hot hand that was lying on the pillow, she could not help being full of anxiety for her. This same fever had attacked her elder brother, and for weeks he had hovered between life and death; only kept alive for days together by constant spoonfuls of beef-tea and brandy, and now here was Olive, so much more delicate, exposed to the same danger.

After a quarter of an hour, Olive woke up, wondering to find herself in such a cool, shaded room, and half bewildered to know where she was, she seemed to revive, however, after the broth, and the doctor, when he came, seemed hopeful about being able to check the fever.

Mrs. Wykeham spent all that day with her, saying when she left in the evening to go over to the vicarage, 'I shall come again to-morrow after church, and sit with you for the afternoon, and perhaps we may be able to have a little short talk.'

When next day Mrs. Wykeham came into Olive's room, she was quite cheered to find her looking so much better for the change, and seeming glad to have some one to sit with her. 'Shall you feel able to

listen to me if I have a little talk with you?' said Mrs. Wykeham, taking out her Bible.

'Oh, yes, ma'am; I will lie still and listen,' said Olive, brightly.

Very slowly and gently Mrs. Wykeham read through a few verses from the 12th chapter of Hebrews,

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," she repeated, 'I think that is a very comforting text for us when we are ill. It seems so hard to bear all the pain and weariness, and we feel inclined to wonder why, when other people are out and about in the sunshine enjoying themselves, we should be turning from side to side on our pillow, and finding no rest. But when we know that it is God's doing, and that He has some wise purpose for it, then it helps us to I will not ask you what are the lessons be content. to be learnt from sickness, for you are not well enough to think much for yourself; but I will tell you one or two. First, I think sickness is meant to give us a little time to lie by and rest. We live in such a hurry, most of us, that the thoughts of heaven and the home beyond get "crowded out." We have no time to ponder over what is to come, because we are so full of what is going on now. "I will remember Thee upon my bed," says David, "and meditate on Thee in the night watches." No doubt when he wrote those words he had lain tossing on his bed for want of sleep, either through sickness or anxiety; and to us, too, the hours of sleepless weariness may become hours of sweet meditation if we "think upon God."

- 'Another lesson is, to make us learn sympathy, and how to feel for others. Till I was ill myself, I never really never felt for other people.'
 - 'Were you ever very ill, ma'am?' asked Olive.
- 'Yes; I was, I believe,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'very near death once, and what those days and nights taught me will never pass from my memory. I learnt more then than in years of health, because when the world seems slipping away from us, God draws very near and teaches us Himself.'
- 'I've felt that lately,' said Olive, 'and nothing else seemed to matter much. I think Moses must have felt like that when he was all alone up in the mount with God; while he was listening to what God had to say, he forgot all about the people down below and what they might be doing.'
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'God does not take us apart into a mountain in these days to show us His glory, but He often takes us apart from our fellow-creatures in times of sickness, and reveals Himself to us as He never did before. But that I should have called one of the blessings of sickness rather than one of its lessons; shouldn't I?'
- 'Yes, ma'am,' said Olive; 'but then we are learning, too.'
- 'And now, my child,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'we mustn't talk any more at present, but if you like to rest now, I will go and see about your tea, and by-and-bye, when Mrs. Grant is gone to church, and you and I have the hospital to ourselves, perhaps we may have another little talk.'

But when the evening came, Olive was too feverish for Mrs. Wykeham to allow any more talking, so sitting down, she wrote a letter to the girls at home about what she had been telling Olive, and wound up her letter by saying, 'You must write this in your books for to-day:

'Sunday, July 26th.

'Subject.—On Sickness.

'Lesson.—Sickness is God's lesson time.'

FINC COMMAN.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON EXAMPLE.

NEXT morning, as it was raining hard, Mrs. Wykeham was not able to walk up to the hospital, but having sent to inquire after Olive, and hearing a better account of her, she decided on returning home.

'I feel I shall leave her in good hands,' she said to the clergyman's wife, 'and you and the doctor between you will be sure to let me know how she goes on.'

'That we will,' she answered; 'and she shall have everything she wants.'

When Mrs. Wykeham arrived at home, the whole household was anxious to hear how she had found Olive, and many were the lamentations at her tidings, for Olive had made herself a general favourite by her gentle ways and pleasant temper.

'It is your turn for a subject,' said Mrs. Wykeham to the girls next Sunday; 'you remember you missed one, and I had to supply it for you.'

'Yes, ma'am,' answered Rhoda, 'and as you told us the kind of things that would do to choose, we have chosen this for to-day. We didn't bring it before,' she added, 'for you to think over, because

we knew you were so busy this week.' So saying, she handed Mrs. Wykeham a slip of paper on which was written, 'Example.'

'Well, I can only give you the thoughts that come uppermost in my mind at the moment,' said Mrs. Wykeham, taking the paper; 'but perhaps if you have thought about it, you will have something more to say than I shall.'

'Oh, no, ma'am!' exclaimed Kitty; 'there's no chance of that; we never think of anything till you help us.'

'I find you sometimes want a great deal of "pumping," as we used to call it, to get anything out of you,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'But now for our subject. Is it to be good or bad example?'

'Why both, ma'am, I suppose,' answered Selah.

'Which, then, shall we take first?' she asked.

'Bad,' replied Kitty, promptly.

'Why?' said Mrs. Wykeham, laughing. 'I hope that you do not think your example is likely to be a bad one.'

'I don't suppose mine would be either good or bad,—at least very bad,' she added, correcting herself.

'Which means that you wouldn't be taken for an example much one way or another, I suppose?'

'Yes, ma'am,' answered Kitty.

'Well, that is just the very first thing for each one of you to get out of your head, for there is not one of us, rich or poor, who is not setting an example of one kind or another, perhaps without even knowing it. Do you suppose that in all your life no one ever

said of you, "Oh, Kitty does it," or, "Rhoda does it," and "why shouldn't I?"'

'Oh, yes!' cried Rhoda. 'Of course people have said that; why at home, when I was little, my brothers and sisters said it every time I climbed a wall or walked into a puddle.'

'Well,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and people will say it more or less all your life, and the question to consider is, "Shall I set a good example for those younger or weaker than myself to follow, or shall I set a bad one?"

'Of course, some people's example is more followed than others, for some of us have more influence or more power than those around us. But again, I repeat, there is not one of us ever so poor, ever so young, or ever so foolish, who can dare to say, "It does not matter what I do; nobody will take example from me." Why, people are often no better than a flock of sheep, and just because they see one go down a certain road all the rest will follow. Let us take heed, lest we not only go wrong ourselves, but may be also leading others astray after us.

'Make up your mind, then, that it does matter what you do, and that if you do what is wrong some one is pretty sure to make your doing it an excuse for themselves. With girls of your age, I think that the force or power of example is particularly strong, especially with each other.

'I will give you an instance. At one time in our village the girls had a very untidy way of doing their hair in nets, just pushed away anyhow, all rough

and uncombed. Now it happened that one of my maids had most beautiful golden-brown hair, which she fastened in smooth, soft plaits at the back of her head. The first time she sat in the choir I noticed several girls looking admiringly at what was evidently a new fashion in the village. A few Sundays after, one or two of the black nets had disappeared and neat little plaited knobs appeared at the back of two of the choir girls' heads, peeping out from under their bonnets. "Well done!" I thought to myself; "I do believe that Nellie is going to set the fashion, and that my old enemies, those dirty black nets, are going to be thrown away." My guess was a right one, for not many months afterwards, on looking round among the girls, I could scarcely see one, and plaits, large or small, as Nature had granted them, were neatly fastened at the back of every head. Nellie had set the fashion or example, call it which you will, and the others had very wisely followed it. We all of us are apt to do what we see others do, sometimes, almost without knowing it.

'Another way in which girls set each other an example besides in the matter of dress is in manner. When I first began a class of village girls I found some were much rougher in their manner than others were, just as some were more untidy in their dress; but as the class went on, I noticed that the rough ones learnt politeness from their better-taught neighbours, as much as they learnt to smooth their hair and wash their hands. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," so I suppose good communica-

tions *mend* them. I have generally found that in every village there are one or two girls who take the lead, and have the power of influencing the others, either for good or for evil. Often it is a girl like Mary Malcombe—you remember her, don't you, Rhoda and Kitty?'

'Oh, yes,' said Kitty; 'she was such fun!'

'Yes, she had high spirits, and was always full of fun and mischief,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and the consequence was, that what with laughing at the other girls, and what with over-persuading them, she used to lead many of my class into mischief. I think they all admired her, for she was tall and nicelooking, and she had what her mother called "a way with her." Poor girl! she came to a sad end at last, but just think if she had used that persuasive manner and those pleasant "ways" of hers for good instead of for evil, as she did, alas! what an example she might have been, and how many would have listened to her!'

'But we don't live in the village, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'at least, I mean we don't come across the village girls, so I don't see how they can take example one way or another from us.'

'You can't live in any place, without people hearing and knowing about you, Rhoda,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and in your case, if the village girls heard of your behaving badly, do you not think they would be the first to cry out, "Oh, So-and-so, up at the House, did this or that, and I'm sure if she does it, no one need say anything to me." Can't you

fancy your example telling in that way? I heard not long ago of a case exactly like this. It was when a clergyman's wife had rebuked one of the village girls for wrong-doing. Directly the lady was gone, she turned to her grandmother, saying, "It's all very well for her to talk, but if she only knew how Mary Ann the cook goes on directly her back was turned, she wouldn't say much to me." And so "Mary Ann's" wrong-doing up at the Vicarage not only set a bad example to the whole village, but caused the kind words of her good mistress, who knew nothing about it, to be laughed at and scorned. These are only cases that have come under my own notice that I give you, to show how much farther than we think the effects of our example may spread.'

'But if bad example spreads so far, ma'am,' said Rhoda, 'doesn't good example spread as far, too?'

'It would, Rhoda,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'if it were not for one thing, and that is, that we all find it easier to copy what is wrong than what is right; but good example is a great help. Many who would grow weary in well-doing take courage, thinking how others have fought and are fighting the same battle. What does St. Paul say of our great example, "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Shall we not all try by following, even though it be so far off, in His footsteps to set a good example and to help others on the road to heaven? There is only one more remark I should like to make. I heard a little address given by a clergyman to girls like you, the

other day, and he ended with some such words as these: "Go back to your homes, to your work, and set a good example, but be sure you remember one thing—it must be a *silent* example, almost an unconscious one. Do not set yourselves up and say, 'Look at me, see what a model I am, see what an example I set you.' If once you do that sort of thing, you set no example, but one of pride and self-sufficiency; do what is right, and your example will 'set itself:"'

'I know where that was said,' cried Selah. 'I was there, ma'am,—don't you remember? It was at our Friendly Society Festival. I hadn't come to live here then; Miss Martin took me over to Preston with her girls.'

'Ah, yes!' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'I forgot you were there. Well, I'm very glad you remembered it: and now for the lesson. What do you think we ought to write?'

'This, ma'am, I think,' said Rhoda, handing her book, in which she had written,—

' Sunday, August 2nd,

'Subject.—On Example.

'Lesson.—Ask yourself, "Am I setting a good or a bad example?"'

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON LETTER-WRITING.

MRS. WYKEHAM had heard regularly of Olive the last fortnight, and the accounts had not at all lessened her anxiety about her. It had, as the doctor feared, proved to be typhoid fever from which she was suffering.

'Day after day,' wrote Mrs. Porter, the clergyman's wife, 'she lies tossing on her bed, sometimes speaking quite sensibly and knowing us all, and at other times quite unconscious, and especially at night. I was sitting by her the other evening, and her wanderings were most pitiful to hear. "Where is Mrs. Wykeham," she kept saying, "I can't think why she doesn't come to me. Tell her to come," she would repeat plaintively; and then suddenly starting up in her bed, she cried out, "Oh! of course, though, she can't come, she's gone to heaven; but I'm going there soon," she said, "and then I shall see her, so never mind."

'The doctor says that the crisis will probably be on the seventeenth day, and till then we can scarcely say how it will go with her. Having been so weakened before with the cold on her chest and the constant cough, is of course against her; but I will be sure to let you know directly there is any change. We do all we can by giving her beef-tea, milk, and brandy, to keep up her strength, for she is terribly weak; and she will, I fear, be still more so when the fever leaves her.'

All these particulars Mrs. Wykeham had read to the girls, whose eyes filled with tears as they pictured to themselves Olive, once so bright and smiling, tossing on her sick bed.

'The worst of it is that neither I nor her mother can be with her,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'I cannot leave home, and her mother cannot leave her brother, who still requires constant watching. However, she is well taken care of by the kind matron at the hospital.'

Mrs. Wykeham had as usual given the girls their paper for the following Sunday, and they were full of expectation when they met in her room, as to what would come of the subject she had chosen, which was 'Letter-writing.'

'I needn't tell you what put the thought of "letters" and "letter-writing" into my head for this week,' began Mrs. Wykeham, 'when we have all been watching so eagerly for the Bramfield post-mark, to hear news of Olive; but I daresay you may wonder what I can find to say to you about it. Well, it has occurred to me that as you have all learnt to write,—an accomplishment your grandmothers scarcely possessed,—perhaps it may be worth while asking if you make a good use of the talent.'

'We don't have much occasion to write letters, ma'am,' said Kitty.

'You don't, perhaps, Kitty,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and that is just what I have to complain of in you, or rather what your mother has to complain of, I suspect. I think that, like many girls, your letters home are few and far between, instead of being regular; and I have no doubt your mother would say much what another girl's mother did to me the other day, "There, ma'am, I haven't heard anything of Mary Jane this month or more; she scarcely ever writes home, and she's a first-rate scholar, too. I'm sure I don't know why she doesn't," she added. And I'm sure I didn't know why either, unless it was that she was too lazy to sit down and write the letter that would have given them all such pleasure at home.'

'There doesn't seem anything to say,' said Kitty.

'But even the little things that happen to you every day,—accounts of the place you live in, your friends and your work,—would all be interesting to mother, you know,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'though they don't seem much to you. So, Kitty, I must put you down as one of the girls who write too little. Now there are girls who write too much,' she continued, glancing across with a little smile at Thirza, whom she had found the other day scribbling away in the nursery when she ought to have been looking after the children. 'Some letters are written when the writers ought to have been about their work.'

At this, Thirza blushed a little.

'Of course we must make allowance for education now-a-days, but girls must take care that they don't make their mistresses say, as one said to me the other day, "For my part, I don't see what is the use of all this schooling; it only makes girls waste their time and ink their fingers writing a lot of rubbishy loveletters, when they ought to be minding their kettles and brooms." I don't quite agree with the old lady that all love-letters are rubbish, perhaps as she was never married she never got one herself, but even love-letters must be written at proper time, after work is done.'

Here Rhoda looked across at Thirza, who blushed still more, which made Mrs. Wykeham say to herself, 'So you were writing a love-letter, were you, you little puss, the other day when I came in upon you? I strongly suspect that was a rubbishy love-letter, most love-letters at seventeen are.' However, she said nothing, but went on.

- 'Letters can do a great deal of good, or a great deal of mischief.'
- 'Why, how can they do good, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.
- 'If you cheer mother, or amuse some sick person, if you comfort some one by sympathising words, or lighten someone's anxiety by writing good news, in these ways you can do good, can't you?'
- 'Oh, yes, ma'am,' said Rhoda; 'only it seems so little.'
 - 'Ah, when shall I cure you girls of using those

words?' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'Have you ever heard a saying that "trifles make the sum of human life?" Never say any good deed is too little to be worth doing, for

"Little deeds of kindness, Little words of love, Make our earth an Eden, Like the heaven above."

'But then, what harm can we do by our letters, ma'am?' asked Jane.

'Why the same harm that you can do by speaking, when, for instance, you make mischief by repeating gossip about your mistress or your fellow-servants, by making unkind remarks, or saying what is not true. A friend once said to me, "I am always doubly careful what I write; for what I say may be forgotten, but what I put down in black and white is always there to bear witness against me if I make a mistake." I have often thought of that since, for one never knows what may become of one's letters,—they may be torn up or put into the fire, and meet no eyes but those that they were intended for, or they may be put away, and come out long years after, for good or for evil, when we have passed away. I used at one time to write to the different girls who left our parish to go out to service; and often I have been cheered to find how my words had helped them on, when they were getting discouraged and out of heart. I have here a whole bundle of letters,' said Mrs. Wykeham, taking up a packet tied with red tape, 'all from girls I know; here is one that I got only a few days ago, she writes:—

"I read your letters over every night before I go to bed, ma'am, and it seems just as if you were speaking to me. I can't tell you how it cheers me up, and helps me on with my work when I read over your words."

'And why should not your words be as good as mine to some people?' added Mrs. Wykeham. 'So, you see, letters can do a great deal of good or a great deal of harm.'

'Well, I never should have thought it,' said Kitty; 'and I'm sure I'll think next time before I write a letter.'

'Don't put it off all the longer then, Kitty,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'because, as mother doesn't hear much now, if you think too long over it, she will never hear at all. You see,' continued she, 'there is not a single thing we do, or think, or say, in our everyday life, which may not be turned to a good or a bad account; and that is why I choose any subject that comes uppermost, to try and teach you how to bring religion into daily life, even into the writing of a letter.'

Then Mrs. Wykeham rose, telling the girls that they might leave their books on the window-sills when they had written out the lesson.

Next day, a friend of hers who happened to be calling, began to ask her some questions about Thirza.

'Perhaps you did not know,' she said, 'that before she came here as pupil-teacher she was under our mistress, and the reason we got her transferred to this school was that she had struck up a most undesirable acquaintance with a young man in our village. Her parents strongly objected to her having anything to say to him, for he was not at all steady; and when she left us she promised to have no more to do with him. I am sorry to hear, however, that she persists in keeping up a correspondence with him, and I am afraid if something is not done to stop it, she will get into some mischief. I thought it right to tell you.'

'I am very glad you did,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'for though I am the last person to interfere usually in such matters, yet in the case of a mere child like Thirza, one feels bound to act a mother's part towards her.'

That same evening Mrs. Wykeham took the opportunity of speaking very seriously to Thirza, and showing her how wrong it was to disobey her parents, by keeping up an underhand correspondence with any one of whom they did not approve.

Thirza cried and seemed very penitent, promising Mrs. Wykeham not to write any more letters that she would be ashamed to show at home or to let her mother know of. 'I didn't know it was wrong,' she sobbed; 'I thought if I didn't see him, writing wouldn't matter.'

'Well, you see now that it does matter, don't

you, Thirza? and you won't forget last Sunday's lesson. See, this was what I wrote,—

'Sunday, August 9th.

'Subject.—On Letter-writing.

'Lesson.—Write no letters that you would be ashamed to show.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON REVERENCE.

OLIVE was better; the doctor spoke favourably. Mrs. Porter wrote hopefully, and the girls, when they heard the news, rushed, as girls will, from the extreme of despair to the opposite extreme of hope.

'Olive's going to get well now,' cried Rhoda bursting into the nursery with the letter, which Mrs. Wykeham had given her to show nurse.

Nurse, however, shook her head, observing, 'We must not make too sure; you girls are always up in the attic or down in the cellar.'

- 'What do you mean, nurse?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Why, that when you aren't crying, you're laughing. One day Olive isn't going to live a minute, and the next she's nearly well. I suspect the truth mostly lies between,' added nurse, musingly.
- 'Between what, nurse?' asked Rhoda. 'Between the attic and the cellar. I suppose that would be on the first floor,' she added, laughing.

'The truth mostly lies between two extremes,' answered nurse, with the gravity of a judge.

Kitty was, if possible, more carried away by her delight at the good news than any one. She danced

about with the pots and pans till cook said that she was like the cow that jumped over the moon.

Kitty, of course, could not resist adding aside to Rhoda, 'I only wish this dish would run away with the spoon: then I'd have a splendid chase after them.'

When the servants came in to prayers, after the chapter had been read, they all rose as usual to kneel down, when Mrs. Wykeham, from the opposite end of the room, heard a subdued titter, followed by a little cough that was meant to hide an unmistakable giggle. On looking round from where she knelt, she saw Kitty's shoulders shaking with suppressed laughter. She had long noticed that the girls were not as reverent in church as she could have wished, and thought that now would be a good time to choose for a little talk with them on the subject of 'Reverence.'

'Our subject seems to have chosen itself, Kitty,' she said, the following morning, 'and this is what it will be,' she added, handing her a slip of paper on which the word 'Reverence' was written.

Kitty blushed, and Mrs. Wykeham, seeing that she knew what was meant by the silent reproof, added no more at the time.

'What is the meaning of the word "Reverence?"' began Mrs. Wykeham next Sunday, after she had answered the usual inquiries about Olive, who was much the same.

- 'Does it mean honour?' asked Thirza.
- 'Yes, it means that,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but something more than that.'
 - 'Respect?' asked Kitty.

'Yes; but that too is not enough. It means to look upon any one or anything with veneration or awe. There is an old expression which perhaps you may have heard, to "do reverence" to any person, which means to bow down before them. Now to whom do we owe this reverence and honour?'

'To God, and to holy things,' answered Thirza, who generally caught up most of the questions, being quicker than the others in consequence of her school training.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'and the question we have each to ask ourselves this afternoon is this, Do I pay to God, and to all His ordinances, as much reverence as I ought? Tell me some of the ways in which we can find out if we do.'

At this Kitty hung her head, but faltered out, 'By asking ourselves if we are reverent at our prayers.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'by some such question as this: When I kneel down to pray, whether alone or with others, do I think what I am doing, and whom it is I am going to speak to? Am I bowing down my heart and soul as well as my body before the Almighty Lord of Heaven and earth, or am I like the children of Israel of whom Isaiah wrote, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me?" If we bow the knee only before God, while our "hearts are far from Him," our prayers become only a mockery, for we are taking the name of God in vain.'

As Mrs. Wykeham said this, Kitty looked very thoughtful; but presently she lifted up her head, and

said, evidently thinking of the evening before, 'Please, ma'am, how can one help it, when things will come into one's head, and make one laugh?'

'You must not let them come there, Kitty, at such a solemn time; that is just what I mean. If they do, your heart is far from God, for it is following after other thoughts. You must drive those thoughts out, to make room for Him.'

'But how can one, ma'am?' asked Kitty.

'By saying to yourself some such words as these,' answered Mrs. Wykeham: "Here am I, kneeling before the footstool of God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and shall I, instead of bowing down my soul before Him, not only forget His presence, but laugh, as it were, in His very face?" Surely such a thought as that would sober you, would it not?'

'Oh, yes, ma'am,' answered Kitty; 'it sounds so shocking. But I never thought of it like that.'

'No, Kitty; because you forget where you are, as I said just now, and what you are doing,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'It is the same when you go to church. You forget whose house it is—forget that you are standing, as David says, "at the very gate of Heaven."

'When I see girls looking about them, at other peoples' bonnets or hats, for instance'—here Mrs. Wykeham glanced across at Rhoda, who knew very well what the look meant—'or when I see them evidently much more interested in their next-door neighbour than they are in their prayers'—here Thirza caught Mrs. Wykeham's eye, and blushed in

her turn, knowing that this was meant for her—
'when I notice these things, or when I see them lounging back in the pews instead of kneeling reverently during the prayers, then I feel inclined to ask, Why do you come here at all, if it is for no better purpose than this?'

'But, ma'am,' said Selah, 'it is so difficult to attend all the time.'

'I know that myself only too well,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but shall I tell you the reason? It is because we do not really love God. Supposing any one had brought you a message from some one you loved very dearly, and who was far away, would you not listen eagerly to every word? would you not long to send messages of love in return? would not your whole heart go out towards them? If we really loved God, would it not be the same with Him? Or if you were yourself speaking face to face with any one very dear to you, would you be contented with merely repeating a form of words that some one had taught you? Would not your heart teach you what to say? And is it so with our prayers to God?'

'I see,' said Selah, 'and it is quite true, I know, but how shall we learn to pray from our hearts?'

'The more we learn to know God,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'the more we shall love Him, and the more we love Him the greater will be our reverence.'

Mrs. Wykeham here paused a moment and then continued: 'But do you think that it is only in our prayers that we can show irreverence?'

'No, ma'am,' answered Selah.

- 'In what other way, then, can we be irreverent?' said Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'By laughing about things out of the Bible, ma'am?' asked Jane.

'Yes; that is to say, that we are sometimes tempted to use the words of Holy Scripture in jest, or else words that have in themselves a sacred meaning. For instance, though I do not say that it is actually "taking the name of God in vain," yet I do say that it always sounds to me irreverent, when I hear people use such expressions as "Good heavens!" or "Lord, preserve us," or any of the other foolish exclamations that we so often hear used without a thought as to their true meaning.'

'Oh, I know, ma'am!' said Jane; 'there was an old woman near us at home who used to be always crying out, "Lawk a mercy me!" and I never knew what it meant till one of our ladies told me, and then I never used it again, for I'd caught it up myself,' she added, 'from always hearing her say it.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'that is another expression of the same kind, and you must all know plenty more, which I need not stop to tell you of now.

'So you see, we must reverence God's house, God's word, God's name, and—what was the other word I used, Kitty?'

- 'God's ordinances, ma'am?' she asked.
- 'Yes; and what would they be?'
- 'What He had ordered, ma'am,' said Rhoda.
- 'Just so,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'for instance, we

must reverence the sacraments, as ordered or ordained by Christ Himself: we must reverence His ministers, as those whom He has set over us: we must reverence the Sabbath, as the day that He has set apart for Himself; all these are God's ordinances.

'Very often it is in the mere thoughtlessness of youth and high spirits that you may become irreverent without intending it, but you must watch and strive against it, because it is a habit that will grow upon you.'

'But what can we do, ma'am, when people begin laughing and joking with us about things that are holy?' asked Kitty.

'Be silent,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'and do not laugh or joke in return; that will generally be a better answer than any words that you could say.

'And now I should like you,' she continued, 'to take your Bibles and find me some different places where irreverence is spoken of as a sin or where people were punished for being irreverent about holy things, for I think that will fix what we have been talking of in your minds.'

'I shall find about Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,' said Kitty, turning to Thirza, as Mrs. Wykeham rose to go.

'And I know one, too,' answered Thirza in a low voice; 'don't you remember about the men who touched the ark?'

'Oh, and the wicked boys, and the bear that came out of the wood to punish them for mocking at

Elisha,' said Rhoda, as they all left the room together.

Mrs. Wykeham looked over the different texts they had written in their books that evening, and copied the lesson from Thirza's book this time. It was as follows:—

'Sunday, August 16th.

'Subject.—On Reverence.

'Lesson.—We must never think or speak lightly of holy things.'

CHAPTER XXV.

ON HAPPINESS.

THE accounts of Olive were most encouraging. It was now just four weeks since the fever had attacked her, and no worse symptoms having developed themselves, the doctor hoped soon to pronounce her convalescent. It was, therefore, with lightened hearts that Mrs. Wykeham and the girls met together in her room next Sunday to talk over the subject they had chosen for her this time. It was about 'Happiness.'

'You must first explain to me a little,' began Mrs. Wykeham, 'what you wanted to know about happiness, and why you chose that subject?'

'Because, ma'am,' said Rhoda, 'we were wondering why some people always look happy and smiling, while others who are no worse off look as miserable as possible. Why should one person be happier than another when there is nothing to make them so?'

'Well, it was a very good thought to come into your head,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and I think it will be quite worth our while to try and find out; for nothing is pleasanter than to live with people who seem always happy and contented, and nothing is

more miserable, both for ourselves and those around us, than a grumbling, discontented, I was almost going to say, a "whining" disposition.'

'Oh! I know, ma'am,' said Kitty, 'some people make themselves miserable about nothing.'

'But this kind of unhappy disposition that we are speaking of,' continued Mrs. Wykeham, 'comes sometimes from being in ill health, and sometimes from constant trouble, so we must be careful not to confuse that in our minds with the unhappiness that is our own fault. You must all of you have known people who had good cause for unhappiness.'

'Oh, yes, ma'am,' answered Selah; 'there was my aunt that was left a widow, with seven children, and lost her husband from a dreadful accident. I know they say she never smiled again, and I'm sure I never heard her laugh.'

'No doubt,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'trouble had crushed her spirit, and her unhappiness we should have felt for and pitied; should we not, rather than blamed? Then, again, you remember that poor little deformed boy, James Arkell, who always looked so melancholy; his health was the cause of that, he could not, if he had felt inclined to, run about, and shout, and play, like other children.'

'Yes, ma'am,' answered Rhoda, 'but we didn't mean that kind of unhappiness, for anyone can understand that, but the kind of unhappiness that people make for themselves, so to speak. Don't you think, they can help it?'

'If I were asked the three things that would make

a man or woman happy,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'I should say, the love of God, health, and a cheerful disposition. So we will take each in turn, and then consider how much people can help being unhappy, as it were, without cause.'

'I'm not unhappy often,' interrupted Kitty; 'except when Olive is ill, and I hate people to be always pulling long faces.'

- 'So we all do,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'so now let us see how to cure them.
 - 'What did I say was the first and best cure?'
 - 'The love of God,' answered Jane.
- 'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'those who love God ought to be the only really happy people in the world; for they ought to feel sure that whatever happens to them is for the best. If we really and truly believed this from the bottom of our hearts, it would cure a very great deal of our unhappiness. Next?'
 - 'Health,' answered Kitty.
- 'Yes, we must try and keep ourselves well, for as long as we are well and strong, we have no excuse for being always "grumbling and growling," as it is called, about every little thing; we needn't make ourselves unhappy because it is too hot or too cold, too sunny or too windy.'
 - 'I shouldn't,' said Kitty.
- 'No, of course you wouldn't,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'because you are one of the strong ones by nature. What was my next and last cure?'
 - 'A cheerful disposition,' answered Selah: 'but

that means what we have by nature, ma'am, doesn't it, and if we haven't got it, it isn't our fault.'

- 'If we have got it, we shall have all the less trouble,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but if we haven't, we must *make* it.'
 - 'But how can we?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Well, tell me first what a person of a cheerful disposition does.'
- 'They are happy about things,' answered Rhoda, 'and make the best of them.'
- 'Then can't we all learn to do that?' asked Mrs. Wykeham. 'Can't we learn to look out for the bright side of things, instead of the dark side? Supposing you were walking down a street, one side of which was in shadow, and the other in sunshine; and supposing, instead of looking at the sunny side, and walking there, you persisted in walking in the shade, and turning your head away from the sunshine, saying, "I see nothing but shadows," wouldn't any one, passing by on the sunny side, if he were to hear you. answer, "No, of course, because you won't look this way; but you've only to turn your head to see it?" Well, life is like that street, and you may choose which side you will, to walk down. I, for my part, prefer the sunshine; and if I see people inclined to walk in the shade,'-here Mrs. Wykeham looked across at Thirza, who had lately seemed rather inclined to be silent and moody—'I try all I can to get them across the road.'

'But somehow we seem to have said more about unhappiness than happiness,' said Selah; 'though, to

be sure, it was to make us happy that you told us of the three cures for *unhappiness*; wasn't it, ma'am? But I don't think we girls are very unhappy; are we?' she asked, laughing, and added: 'I want to see the bright side too.'

'No; I don't think you are, on the whole, in the wrong sense of being grumbling and discontented,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'but I am not sure that you have any of you learnt the secret of a calm, abiding happiness, for it is one that generally comes only in after years. While you are young you are apt to be up and down, very happy one day, and very unhappy the next.'

'Ah, that is what nurse said only the other day,' interposed Rhoda.

'And I think nurse was right,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'the true happiness which we should strive after is a happiness so calm that none of the storms of life can disturb it, and one which, like Christ's gift of peace, the world can neither give nor take away. The heart that possesses it is at rest, because it rests upon the "Rock."'

'I think Olive was like that,' said Rhoda; 'she was never in great spirits, and yet she always seemed so happy, nothing ever seemed to put her out.'

'I can't think why one can't feel like that,' said Kitty.

'To do so, you must live as Olive did,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'trying to keep near to Christ.'

As Mrs. Wykeham said these words she looked round, fancying she heard a sob behind her, and

found that Thirza, who was sitting a little apart from the others, had got up, and was leaning against the mantelpiece, crying.

Taking no notice of it, she proceeded a little, telling the girls a story about a friend of hers, who, though always lying on her back with an incurable spine complaint, yet was one of the happiest people she ever met, ending with the words, 'And so young girls like you, who have health and strength, with no anxieties or cares to weigh you down, ought to be like sunshine in a house.'

As the girls got up to go, Mrs. Wykeham made a sign to Thirza to stay behind.

- 'Now tell me,' she said, kindly, 'what is the matter.'
- 'I don't know hardly how to,' said Thirza, sobbing; 'but your words about being good, if we would be happy, made me feel so miserable.'
- 'Why, haven't you been good lately?' said Mrs. Wykeham, who partly guessed what was the matter.
- 'No, that's just it,' said Thirza, with a sob. 'I know I don't really love God, and so I don't try to do what is right, but only what I like.'
- 'And so you are not happy,' continued Mrs. Wykeham; 'but tell me what it is that you have been doing wrong lately.'
- 'Why, you know, ma'am, about writing those letters that you spoke to me about, I promised to leave off, and not write to him any more, because you said it was going against father and mother; but——'

'Well, but what?' said Mrs. Wykeham, who wanted to make Thirza's confession as easy as she could. 'I suppose he over-persuaded you, and you've been doing it again, and have been unhappy ever since, because you knew you were doing wrong. Was that it?'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Thirza, 'and I don't feel as if I should ever be happy again.'

At this melancholy speech of poor Thirza, Mrs. Wykeham couldn't help smiling a little, yet answered gently, 'Directly you begin to do what is *right*, instead of what you know to be *wrong*, Thirza, you will find your happiness return; but you have made the mistake we often make, of thinking that having our own way will make us happy, whether it is a right or a wrong one, whereas "the answer of a good conscience before God" is necessary, first of all, to our happiness.'

'But how can I be happy, ma'am? I can't be happy if I never hear anything more of—of—him,' she faltered out; 'and I can't be happy when I'm doing what I know is wrong?'

'Do what is *right*, Thirza, and let God take care of your happiness,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'See, this is what I shall write in your book, and you must take it for a happy prophecy as to the future.

'Sunday, August 23rd,

'Subject.—On happiness.

'Lesson.—Be good, and you will be happy.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON DEATH.

- 'PLEASE, ma'am, how is Olive?' began Kitty directly she got into the room next Sunday, but checked herself as she saw that Mrs. Wykeham's eyes were red with crying, and that she came to meet them with a black-edged letter in her hand.
- 'My dear girls,' she began, 'we need no longer say "Olive is ill;" we must learn to say "Olive is well," for it is well with her—not as we should look at it, but as her Heavenly Father sees—well, for she is with Him.'
- 'Not dead! Olive dead!' cried Kitty, bursting into tears. 'I won't and I can't believe it; we heard only last week she was much better and getting well again. Why, I was expecting her back again ever so soon. It can't be true.'
- 'Ah, Kitty,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'we all feel like that when we hear the news of any great sorrow, but we must learn not only to say "Alas, it is true!" but, "God's will be done," for He doeth all things well.'

Jane and Kitty were sobbing bitterly, but when Mrs. Wykeham turned to speak to Rhoda, she saw her standing by the window, white and tearless, and looking as if turned to stone. 'It can't be true,' she,

too, repeated slowly, 'why she has got all her life before her; and only a few weeks ago she was about among us all, as well as ever, doing her work just like one of us. It can't be. Oh, Olive!' and as she uttered her name, suddenly the whole truth seemed to burst upon her, and falling on her knees she hid her face in her hands in a paroxysm of grief.

Mrs. Wykeham could see her whole frame shaking with sobs and her efforts to control them, and going up to her, she laid her hand softly on the shoulder, repeating as she did so, 'And ye shall know that I the Lord have done it.' Seeing that her words produced no effect, she turned to Selah and Thirza, who were standing whispering together at the farther end of the room, and said to them, 'You may both go out for a walk by yourselves this afternoon, and I and the others who knew Olive will stay and have a little talk together.'

When they had left the room, she waited a few minutes till Rhoda's sobs grew less, and Kitty and Jane were a little quieter, and then calling them to her, she sat down on the sofa by the side of Rhoda, who was still on her knees with her face buried in her hands., 'Would you like to hear the letter I have just got from Mrs. Porter?' she asked.

'Oh, yes, ma'am,' said Kitty and Jane, wiping their eyes, and Rhoda got up slowly from her knees and took a seat a little behind Mrs. Wykeham, where she thought she would not be so much noticed. The letter ran as follows:—

'Bramfield,
'Saturday, August 29th.

'DEAR MRS. WYKEHAM,

'I have a very sad task to perform as I sit down to-day to write to you, for I have bad news to tell. You remember that last week the doctor thought that Olive had taken a decided turn for the better, as she had passed not only the seventeenth but the twentieth day, which is also a critical one, and her strength did not seem to have decreased. However, when he came at the matron's request on Friday evening, he found that not only was there a return of the former alarming weakness, but that the disease seemed to have attacked her lungs, from the exceeding shortness of breath. This was what he had feared all along, as her chest was already affected when she came home. He had told me a few days before that a relapse must prove fatal; so from this time we gave up all hope of saving her.

'All that night she lay at death's door, and we thought that every moment would be her last: however, she lingered on, scarcely conscious, till this morning; and then just in the early dawn when the first faint streaks of light were appearing in the eastern sky, she sighed a long, restful sigh, as of a tired child just dropping off to sleep, and that—was the last we knew about Olive.

'Her poor mother was by her bedside, as well as myself, and I think it went to her heart most of all, that Olive had not been able to speak to her, or even to know her, at the last. How often is it so, and the

words that would have been treasured up—the "goodbye" that we long to have heard, is kept from us.'

As Mrs. Wykeham read these words her voice faltered, and for a few minutes nothing was heard in the room, but the sobbing of the three girls, in which she found herself compelled to join. Struggling to regain her composure, she went on:

'This is all of the letter that I need read to you; but before you go, I should like to have a little talk about death, about which Olive now knows all, and about which we who are left behind, know so little. Try and place yourself, each one in thought, on a dying bed. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to die as Olive was? Am I ready to lay down this busy life, to leave off all I am doing, at a few days—it may be a moment's notice, and go to meet my God." Ah, girls, it is a very solemn thought,—a very solemn question! Would not the true answer be too often, "No, I am not ready; I have scarcely even thought about it, and I have not prepared myself to go."

'Death is a subject, from the thought of which we all, more or less, shrink, and especially you who are young and strong. You do not like to think about it, you do not like to talk about it; but to every one of us it must come sooner or later.

'We are all apt to think, "Oh, we may be taken in a few years, but not just yet;" and so we put off thinking about it, till one day we are startled to find that the words, "There is no hope," are true of us, too, at last. But the words, if we are Christ's children, should not be words of terror to us; we need not cling so wildly to the hope of earthly life, if we have the hope of eternal life before us. The fear of death is a fear that grows less as we look steadily at it. Is it the pain of dying that we are afraid of? I think most people suffer much more in their lives than they do at their deaths. Is it the terror of going, we know not whither? Wherever we go, Christ has gone before, and His rod and staff will hold us up through the dark valley. No, to Christ's children the sting of death, and its terror, is taken away, for to them it is only the beginning of a new life.

'If we are not His children, then death must, indeed, be a terrible thought to us, for we are going to meet our Judge.'

Mrs. Wykeham paused for a few minutes, and Rhoda looked up, and asked rather hesitatingly,—

' Did Olive seem afraid to die?'

'No,' said Mrs. Wykeham; 'her mother said she used often to speak about it as if it was quite a natural thing that she should die before long; she was always delicate as a child, and perhaps that partly gave her the feeling. I remember her mother used to say to me, "There, ma'am, she's sure to be taken young; she's too good to live." I always answered, that I thought it was quite a mistake to think that anyone could be too good to live, or that all the good ones were taken, for what would become of the world if none but the bad ones were left? But I told her what I do believe, which is this, that we are each of us taken in our full season, namely, when

God sees that our life, either for good or for evil, is completed. When that is, God alone can tell.'

'I'm sure I'm not good enough to die,' said Kitty.

'So many people say, Kitty, and make that an excuse for putting off the thought of death; but as our times are in God's hands, what we have to learn from the thought of death is, to live so as to prepare for it.'

'How can we do that, ma'am?' asked Rhoda.

'I think I can best give you an answer, by telling you a little story of an old man I once knew. I was asking him if he would be afraid if the judgment-day were suddenly to come. "No! I don't think so," he answered. "Tell me why," I asked. "Do you think that you would be ready at any moment to answer the Master's call?" "Yes, I think so," he said, "and I'll tell you why. I don't feel that if I knew He was coming to-morrow, I should much alter my way of living to-day. I tries all I know to keep close to Christ as it is, and I think that's the best way to be ready for Him." And now we must not talk any more to-day, though I should like you to think a little more when you are alone of what I have been saying to you. Then dear Olive's death will teach you a lesson that you will never forget, and the thought of her who is gone before will point you the way to Heaven.'

Mrs. Wykeham next day gave each of the girls a little card, on which she wrote the date of Olive's

death, her name and age, surrounded by a wreath of snowdrops; on the other side was written,—

' Sunday, August 30th.

'Subject.—On Death.

'Lesson.—To live each day as if our last.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE MEANS OF GRACE.

- 'Do you know, girls,' said Mrs. Wykeham, the next Sunday, 'that it is just six months ago that we began our talks together?'
- 'Oh, is it, ma'am?' said Kitty; 'I never should have thought it; it seems no time back.'
- 'Yes,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'and I am sorry to say that this will be our last for some time to come, for I am unexpectedly called away from home for some weeks, and I cannot be sure about continuing them when I come back.'
 - 'Oh, dear! I shall be so sorry,' exclaimed Kitty.
- 'And so shall I,' cried Thirza; 'for I don't know how ever I am to keep good, ma'am, if you are not here to help me.'

Mrs. Wykeham knew in her own mind, that Thirza was thinking of their conversation a few Sundays ago, but she only answered, 'I shall be very glad to think that these Sunday talks of ours have been any help to you, girls; but, after all, my help can be of very little use to you. To whom must you look for the true help and strength?'

'To God,' answered Thirza, slowly; 'but ——'

- 'Well, but what?' asked Mrs. Wykeham.
- 'I was going to say how will God help us, ma'am, but I ought to know.'
- 'Do you remember the collect, Thirza, which says that God "doth put into our minds good desires," and will enable us to "bring the same to good effect?" That is the way in which He will help us; but then we must help ourselves as well, we must not drive out those "good desires," or take no pains to bring them to "good effect." We must listen to the voice of His Holy Spirit, and use what are called the "means of grace" which He gives us. Can you tell me of some, Jane? you so seldom give me an answer.'
- 'Going to church, ma'am; is that one?' asked Jane.
- 'Yes, if when in church we worship God "in spirit and in truth," answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'not if we go to stare about us, and forget where we are, Now can you tell me of another, Kitty?'
 - 'By praying every day, ma'am,' she answered.
- 'Yes, "private prayer," as we should call it, to distinguish it from the means of grace that Jane spoke of, namely, "public prayer." These are both great helps to living a Christian life; without prayer our souls could not flourish, and we should have no strength to do aright. But are these the only helps God has given us?'
- 'He has given us the Bible to read, that is a help, ma'am; isn't it?' asked Rhoda.
- 'Yes, a very great one,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, and one which is too much neglected. Even one

verse only of the Bible, read daily, would be a help to you, if you would stop a moment to think over its meaning.'

'One gets so used to the words, somehow, ma'am,' said Thirza; 'they seem to slip through one's mind.'

'Yes, I know what you mean, Thirza, and it is a trouble that is a very common one. It would be a very good thing, I think, if when you read your one verse through, morning and evening, you were to get into the habit of putting it in other words, something like explaining it to yourself; and if you found you could not explain it, perhaps, at least, it would make you think more of what its meaning might be.'

'I don't think I quite know how you mean, ma'am,' said Jane, looking up; 'will you give us a text to show how we ought to do it?'

'Very well,' said Mrs. Wykeham, taking up her Bible; 'I will take any verse that comes first. See here, I have opened upon the fourth chapter of Philippians, and the fourth verse, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Try and put that into other words, Jane.'

'That we ought to be glad and happy?' asked Jane.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Wykeham, 'but that isn't all it tells us. Why does it say, "in the Lord?"'

At first the girls did not seem able to find any other words for that part of the text, till at last Thirza said, 'Doesn't it mean that religion should make us joyful?'

'Yes,' answered Mrs. Wykeham; 'that is not at

all a bad way of giving the meaning of the text. In other words, it bids us, I think, rejoice with a holy and a sanctified joy. You have only to think of any sermon that you may have heard, to know how much may be found in each text of the Bible, and how much we may learn from it if we try. You see the good that we get from each of the means of grace that God has given us depends on what use we make of it. But there is one which you have not found out yet, one of the greatest, and one which I have been sorry to see you have not made use of as much as you should.'

'Do you mean the Holy Communion, ma'am?' asked Rhoda, who was in the habit of going with Olive pretty regularly as long as she had been there, but who had not been so often lately.

'Yes, I do,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'Can you give me any reason why some of you'—Mrs. Wykeham here looked across to where Kitty and Selah were sitting by the side of Jane—'should make use so very seldom, if ever, of this most precious means of grace?'

Kitty looked down and blushed, but answered, 'Please, ma'am, one doesn't seem good enough.'

'Ah! Kitty, that is one of Satan's favourite devices, to put that thought into people's minds. He whispers to you, "You are not good enough yet, wait till you are more fit to go. You would only be pretending to be holier than other people, whereas you are no better than your neighbours." Do you know what the whispers of the Holy Spirit would be: 'Go and get strength to be better; if you turn away from

the *means* of grace, how can you expect to "grow in grace?" It would be just like a sick man, who, turning away from the medicine ordered him, should say, "No! I'll wait to take that till I get better." Or like a friend of mine whom I was nursing the other day, when pressed to take some food, answered, "No, I feel too faint and weak to take it." "He must be made to," said the doctor; "he is just sinking for want of nourishment."

- 'I didn't think of it like that,' said Kitty.
- 'Was that your reason, too, for not staying to the Holy Communion, Selah? and yours, Jane?' asked Mrs. Wykeham. 'I have often thought of asking you, but hoped that you would have thought of it yourselves, without my urging it upon you.'
- 'I went a few times after I was confirmed,' said Selah; 'and then I left it off.'
 - 'And so did I,' said Jane.
 - 'Then why did you leave off?'
 - 'I don't know,' said Selah.
- 'Because I was laughed at about setting myself up for a saint,' said Jane.
- 'The one for no reason then, and the other for a bad reason. Will you not think the matter over again, then, all of you; that those who go may do so more regularly, more humbly, more prayerfully, and those who do not go, may henceforth obey the loving call of One who loves us with an everlasting love?'
- 'Olive always went,' said Rhoda, presently, in a trembling voice; and added, 'I can't bear, somehow, to go without her now.'

'We must not let any earthly love or sorrow interfere, Rhoda, with the love divine,' answered Mrs. Wykeham. 'Rather when you go, you should feel yourselves the nearer to her, who is now in heaven. You remember what the Creed says, "I believe in the communion of saints;" and surely at no time is that communion closer than when in Communion with our common Lord.'

Mrs. Wykeham, seeing that Rhoda's eyes were full of tears, and that she could bear no more on the subject just at that moment, said, turning to Thirza, 'So you see that my help is very feeble, compared to the help held out to you by God.'

'Yes, I see,' said Thirza; 'but sometimes it is so difficult to know what is right, and it is a help to have someone to talk to about things.'

'Human friends,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, 'may indeed help you by their sympathy and advice; but even on them you must not lean too much. I have often been in such perplexity myself, that no help of any human friend could have satisfied me; and then I always used to fall back upon a text in Isa. xxx. which says, "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Surely no promise of guidance could be more plain than this; but then, as I said before, we must listen for the voice, and obey it, then we shall not only thank God for His "means of grace" here, but for the "hopes of glory" hereafter.'

'Oh, dear! our last lesson,' said Kitty, sorrow-

fully, handing up her book a few minutes later. 'We must try and remember this one most of all, mustn't we? Will this do?' she added.

'Yes, very well,' answered Mrs. Wykeham, as she read,

'Sunday, September 6th.

'Subject.—On the means of grace.

'Lesson.—We must use the means of grace here, if we would attain to the glory hereafter.'

CONCLUSION. -

MRS. WYKEHAM was gone, and without Olive, too, the house seemed quite deserted; but the girls, remembering her words, used to try and 'live them out,' as Kitty used to call it. 'What would Mrs. Wykeham say?' became a very frequent remark; and 'I wonder if we shall ever have any Sunday talks with her again,' was often repeated, as the girls drew together on Sunday afternoons to read or chat between the services.

- 'I don't despair,' said Kitty; 'because sooner or later she must come back again to us, and I'm sure we shall find plenty then to talk about.'
- 'I wish we could remember all she told us,' said Rhoda; 'but one subject seemed to put the other out of one's head.'
- 'I wonder if she wrote it all down,' said Selah; 'we might ask to have it to read over if she did.'
- 'I used to see her writing by the hour, sometimes,' remarked Rhoda; 'and once I saw some printing on her writing-table. It was only a leaf, but I'm almost sure it was the name of a book. I shouldn't wonder ——'

But what Rhoda's suspicions were didn't transpire, for at that moment they were all called off to tea.

Next morning, the postman handed out of his bag, one by one, five mysterious-looking parcels, all alike, wrapped up in brown paper, and directed in a well-known handwriting to each of the girls.

'Come down quick, Rhoda,' shouted Kitty at the top of her voice; 'here's something come for each one of us, and I'm sure it's in Mrs. Wykeham's handwriting.'

'Well, I never!' exclaimed Rhoda, as having cut the string and unfolded the brown paper, a neatlybound book met her gaze, *Half-hours with my Girls*.

'There, now, didn't I say so?'

'No, that you didn't,' said Kitty; 'but we can't forget now, can we?'

And that was how it all came about.

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